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UNDER THE
BSOLUTE AMIR
FRANK A. MARTIN

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UNDER THE ABSOLUTE AMIR

AMIR HABIBULLAH KHAN.

[*Frontispiece.*

UNDER
THE ABSOLUTE AMIR

BY

FRANK A. MARTIN

Illustrated by the Author's Drawings and Photographs, and by other Photographs

LONDON AND NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS
45 ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1907

UNDER
THE ABSOLUTE AMIR

BY

FRANK A. MARTIN

FOR EIGHT YEARS ENGINEER-IN-CHIEF SUCCESSIVELY TO THE AMIRS ABDUR RAHMAN AND HABIBULLAH, AND FOR THE GREATER PART OF THAT PERIOD THE ONLY ENGLISHMAN IN KABUL

Illustrated by the Author's Drawings and Photographs, and by other Photographs

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

ON THE ROAD

PAGE

Order of march—Soldiers and guards—Method of carrying goods by pack animals—Description of camps—Marches—Welcome given to Sirdar Nasrullah at villages and cities—Description of country passed through—Kandahar—Amir and the moullah who took refuge in the Kandahar Sanctuary 1

CHAPTER II

ON THE ROAD—*continued*

Method of fishing in the rivers—Route through Khilat and Mukur to Ghazni and distance from Kandahar—Cold and snow on journey—Ghazni—Robberies and murders on roads before Amir Abdur Rahman's time—Villages and cultivation *en route*—Arrival in Kabul and reception of Sirdar Nasrullah by Amir 16

CHAPTER III

KABUL

The Mihman khana or Guest-house—Description of hamams (Turkish baths)—Description of people met with on roads and streets—Amir Abdur Rahman—Description of palace and audience chamber, and his reception of me—Situation of Kabul and description of country around—Kabul city, its bazars, streets, and filth—Water-supply and drainage systems—Sanitary arrangements—Pariah dogs and crows scavenging city . . . 33

CHAPTER IV

KABUL—*continued*

How streets are governed—City magistrate—Robberies and murders—Bazar shops—Style of palaces and better-class houses—Climate of Kabul 47

Contents

CHAPTER V

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

PAGE

Belief in the supernatural—Dress of men—Complexion—Character of people—Description of various tribes—Languages and schools—Feuds between families—How holidays are spent by the people—Singing and musical instruments—Games and amusements 58

CHAPTER VI

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS—*continued*

Superstitions, fairies, and devils—A curious legend—Astrologers—Children singing prayers on roofs to avert calamity—Different foods in use—Smoking and tobacco—The Amir's chief physician—Snuff—Method of keeping warm in winter—How time is kept—Weddings of different classes—Funerals 78

CHAPTER VII

AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN

Form of government—Abuse of authority—Amir's food and drinking water and taster—Soldiers and horses always ready for flight—Amir's habits—Amir's amusements, attendants, etc.—Amir's feelings towards England—Amir's views on Afridi rising and Boer War—Amir's stratagem 98

CHAPTER VIII

AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN—*continued*

Amir's sons and his treatment of them—Princes and their duties and durbars—Food supplied by Government to members of royal family—How officials are paid—Civil and Military titles—Court life and officials—Law courts—Amir's lingering illness, death, and burial—Rumours of rising—Fears of populace—Burial of household treasures—Plots to get body—Coronation of Amir Habibullah—New Amir's promises of Reform—Amusements 120

CHAPTER IX

PRISONS AND PRISONERS

Kotwal and Kotwali (magistrate and police court)—Policemen as thieves—Description of prisons—Description of how prisoners

Contents

PAGE

are treated and their irons—The old well in Bala Hisar—The spy system—Cutting a man's throat—False reporting—Fanah (wedge) tortures 142

CHAPTER X

TORTURES AND METHODS OF EXECUTION

Amir's iron rule—Hanging by hair and skinning alive—Beating to death with sticks—Cutting men in pieces—Throwing down mountain-side—Starving to death in cages—Boiling woman to soup and man drinking it before execution—Punishment by exposure and starvation—Scaffold scenes—Burying alive—Throwing into soap boilers—Cutting off hands—Blinding—Tying to bent trees and disrupting—Blowing from guns—Hanging, etc. 157

CHAPTER XI

LIFE OF EUROPEANS IN KABUL

Life in Kabul—Houses and gardens—Guards and danger from "Ghazis"— Allowances given wives—Servants and swindling. 173

CHAPTER XII

LIFE OF EUROPEANS IN KABUL—*continued*

Lawlessness—Food: Raising cattle, sheep, fowls, etc.—Presents from princes and others—Famines in Kabul—Cholera—Moullah's pilgrimage and preaching—Use of roofs of houses—Work and working hours—Amusements—Hindu dealers and old curios—Festival visits to Amir and princes—Europeans tried by jury—Letters, cost of postage—Interpreters 192

CHAPTER XIII

SOLDIERS AND ARMS

Clothing—Reviews—Drill—Uniforms of Amir's bodyguard—Arms—Pay—Medals—Length of service—Substitutes—Barracks—Mode of life—Gambling among soldiers—Different tribes forming regiments—Thief tribe and regiment—Officers and promotion—Bands—Afghan anecdotes of incidents during war, 1879–81—Afghan army as a fighting machine—Condition of country for warfare—Illustration of one side of Afghan character 213

Contents

CHAPTER XIV

TRADES AND COMMERCE

PAGE

Amir's interest in mechanical tools, guns, etc.—Workshops—Consumption of fuel—Ustads and workmen—Pay of men—Trades, shopkeepers, and merchants—Produce of country—Exports and imports—Irrigation of crops and fights about water—Caravans and methods of carrying freight—Weights and measures—Mirzas and offices—Debt collecting—Hindoos and Hindoo money-lenders—Mint and coinage of country 229

CHAPTER XV

GEOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF THE COUNTRY

Kabul valley once crater of volcano—Earthquakes—Kabul once a large lake—Mines outcropping, gold, lead, copper, coal, etc.—Rivers, and gold in them—Existence of kept secret for fear of trouble—Turkestan mines—The question of fuel for Kabul workshops—Local supply exhausted—Coal under the valley of Kabul 254

CHAPTER XVI

RELIGION

Suni and Shiah—Moullahs and their influence on the people—Jihads or holy wars—The Koran—Late Amir's distrust of Moullahs—Holy men, fakirs, and holy graves—Madmen and reverence paid them as God-stricken—Sayid and Hafiz—Beggars and alms—Stoning to death for religious offences—Prayers—Punishments for not knowing prayers—Musjids—Ramazan and fastings—Haj—Afghan colony in Australia—Lawful and unlawful food—Plurality of wives 266

CHAPTER XVII

POLITICAL SITUATION

Amir's policy in killing off leading men of country to ensure his son's reign—Dwindling revenue—Why Amir could not meet Lord Curzon in India—Russian encroachment on frontier—Russian influence in Kabul—Afghanistan a menace to Russian approach towards India—Afghan rule cheapest means of keeping unruly tribes in order—Policy to keep the Afghans well

Contents

PAGE

armed—Sympathy with English justice and government—Influence of British Agent on the people—Why railways are not wanted in Afghanistan—Reason rich mines are left unworked—Seaboard wanted by Amir on Beloochistan coast—Internal policy of Amir Abdur Rahman 289

CHAPTER XVIII

ROAD FROM KABUL TO PESHAWAR

Difficulty of getting permission to enter Afghanistan and to leave it—Description of country passed through—Camping-places on way down and distances—Description of Jelalabad City—Usbeg horseback game of Buz-bazee—Kabul river at Jelalabad and beyond—The musak—Summer heat—The last day's journey 308

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

TO FACE PAGE

AMIR HABIBULLAH KHAN . . . . . *Frontispiece*

THE SHAHZADA ON THE MARCH FROM KANDAHAR TO KABUL . . 8
(*From a drawing by the Author*)

SIRDAR MAHOMED OMAR KHAN AND STAFF 24

AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN IN EVERYDAY DURBAR. SIRDAR HABIBULLAH (PRESENT AMIR) SITTING WITH HIM 40
(*From a drawing by the Author*)

THE MIHMAN KHANA (GUEST-HOUSE), KABUL 48

PORTION OF GARDEN ATTACHED TO MY HOUSE—SAINT'S GRAVE IN THE CORNER OF GARDEN 48

GROUP OF AFGHAN GUARDS AND SERVANTS—TAKEN IN COMPOUND OF MY HOUSE—KITCHEN AT THE BACK 80

MARRIAGE PARTY OF THE "UPPER TEN." BRIDE AND WAITING-WOMEN CARRIED IN LITTERS 88
(*From a drawing by the Author*)

MARRIAGE PARTY OF POORER CLASS—BRIDEGROOM AND BRIDE FOLLOWED BY GIRL CARRYING THE BRIDE'S CLOTHES . . . 96
(*From a drawing by the Author*)

AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN AND OFFICIALS AT DINNER 104
(*From a drawing by the Author*)

PRINCE INIATULLAH—ELDEST SON OF AMIR HABIBULLAH KHAN —AND STAFF 120

List of Illustrations

TO FACE PAGE

AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN KHAN 128

KABULI WOMAN'S INDOOR DRESS 200

NEW PORTION OF KABUL WORKSHOPS, WITH THE SIRDAR'S BUNGALOW AND OFFICE IN CENTRE 232

SOLDIERS ON GUARD IN GARDEN OUTSIDE THE KABUL WORKSHOPS EATING FOOD 240

(From a drawing by the Author

GROUP OF KABUL MIRZAS (WRITERS, OR CLERKS) 248

THE SERAI AT INGDALAK, ON THE ROAD FROM KABUL TO PESHAWAR 312

UNDER THE ABSOLUTE AMIR

CHAPTER I

ON THE ROAD

Order of march—Soldiers and guards—Method of carrying goods by pack animals—Description of camps—Marches—Welcome given to Sirdar Nasrullah at villages and cities—Description of country passed through—Kandahar—Amir and the moullah who took refuge in the Kandahar Sanctuary.

In the summer of 1895 the Afghan prince, Shahzada Nasrullah Khan, was the guest of the English Government for three or four months, and he had been entertained and *fêted* and generally made much of while his visit lasted, and his return journey had been made pleasant by a stay in Paris, Rome, and Naples before going on by sea to Karachi and thence by rail to Chaman, the railway terminus close to the Afghan frontier on the Quetta side of Beloochistan.

The Shahzada was met and entertained at the railway terminus by General Sir J. Brown, commanding the Quetta district, with other officers and officials, and afterwards rode on to his camp across the border, where he was joined by a multitude of troops and followers, who had been sent by the Amir to accompany him on his further journey.

Under the Absolute Amir

I had accompanied the Shahzada, as he was commonly called in England, on his return from London, and rode with him through Kandahar to Kabul, and when he set out from his camp early the following day I formed one of his retinue. It was near the end of October and late in the season, but the day we started was a very hot one, and grew hotter as we went on, and the multitude of horsemen who accompanied the prince caused clouds of dust to rise as they rode along and made it still more sultry and oppressive.

The country looked very desolate and inhospitable, for on all sides stretched a large undulating sandy plain, bare of vegetation, save a few tufts of coarse grass here and there, and rocks jutting out of the plain in places, while in the distance were bare foothills and barren rocky mountains, and over all the sun threw its burning rays until the sand and rocks seemed to give out as much heat as the sun itself. There is no made road from Chaman to Kandahar, nothing but a track worn into the earth by the passing of caravans from time immemorial, and at places on the side of the track were the bones of horses and camels whitening where they had fallen. The prince and his retinue, however, rode along cheerfully, for they had returned safely through all the dangers of foreign travel and had many tales of strange lands and stranger customs to tell their relations and friends when they got to Kabul, and had brought with them finely wrought produce of these

lands to make presents of and to trade with and reap much profit.

In front of the Shahzada were two long lines, wide apart, of Usbeg Lancers. At an interval on either side of him, and following the Usbegs, were two other lines of the bodyguard, the Rissalah Shahi, armed with sword and carbine, and better uniformed than the others, and following these were troops of sowars who were roughly dressed and wild-looking, though not so wild-looking as the Usbegs with their sheepskin busbies, the hair of which falls about their faces and makes them look wilder than nature made them. The sowars' mode of keeping line would, perhaps, have offended a military eye, but they nevertheless looked very serviceable in case of need.

Before all rode a man with a native drum strapped to the saddle in front of him, which he kept continuously tapping in time to his horse's hoof beats; this is the custom used to signify the approach of a royal personage when travelling.

Beside the prince ran a man carrying a huge gold embroidered umbrella, as a protection from the scorching rays of the sun, and around him were syces and foot guards, while a little in front were other syces leading spare horses. Behind rode attendants and the Khans and chiefs who were accompanying him, and I rode with these and knew what it was like to ride in a cloud of dust which caked the perspiration on one's face and was so dense that the horses

stumbled over stones in the road they were unable to see.

Along the track, and stretching away into the distance, both before and behind, were strings of camels and pack-horses, each with its own dust-cloud and accompanied by their drivers, who were on foot. These carried the tents and baggage of this small army, and with each string of animals was a sowar, or trooper, whose duty it was to see that there was no undue delay on the road and to ensure the full load reaching the next camp, for most of the pack animals were the property of men who make a trade of carrying goods, and these men are not averse to making a little extra profit when opportunity offers.

It was with a feeling of thankfulness that I heard the prince order a halt for tea soon after midday, for my mouth was parched with heat and dust. We all dismounted by the side of a hillock, and seated ourselves on the stones and rocks round about while tea was prepared; excepting, of course, attendants and soldiers, who are not supposed to feel fatigue. After drinking tea the prince offered me a cigarette, and I may mention that he showed me many courtesies and kindnesses on the journey and ordered fur-lined overcoats to be made for me by his tailors, saying that English coats were unsuitable for the extreme cold we should afterwards experience, and I appreciated his thoughtfulness in this very thoroughly afterwards. The Shahzada was a different being in

his own country, not at all like the Afghan Prince in London.

After a short rest the march was resumed and continued until camp was reached. The afternoon's ride was more pleasant, for the heat was less, and, the track running over harder ground, the dust was not quite so much in evidence.

At all of the villages we passed the inhabitants were crowded outside the walls to see the Shahzada and his people, while the head men of the village stood in front of the others, and, as the prince came up, took off their turbans with both hands, and prayed for him and his safe journey. Outside most of the villages long poles were fixed in the ground on either side of the track, with a string stretching across from top to top, and from the centre of the string the Koran was suspended, wrapped in cloths. The prince and his followers, when passing under the Koran, stretched up their right hands and touched it, and then with that hand touched each of their eyes, their mouths, and hearts, saying a short prayer the while. After this the Shahzada would stop for a time and talk with the head men of the village, and then ride on. Two or three bands accompanied the party, and on the prince's arrival at each camping-ground they played the royal salute as he rode in (this was also done when leaving). At each camp also a large shamiana was ready, and there he would hold durbar, which all the chief men of the country round about attended, either to salaam the prince or to receive

payment for the provisions and forage supplied to the men sent on in advance to prepare everything against his coming.

At many of the places stopped at were men who had come to meet those friends or relations who had been to England, but it was at Chaman that the Afghans first got news of their relatives. When first meeting a friend they embrace three times, first to the right, then to the left, and then to the right again, after which streams of question and answer follow. It was touching to see the eager questions after the triple embrace, and to see some turn away crying, possibly at the news of the death of a relative, or it may have been that they were overcome at meeting with friend or relative.

While superintending the unloading of baggage from the goods train at the Chaman terminus, before crossing the frontier, I noticed the Kotwal, one of the prince's staff who accompanied him on his visit to England, sitting on some boxes and looking very glum. He knew sufficient Urdu to carry on a conversation, and so I asked what troubled him. He sighed, and said that he had just heard that his brother in Kabul had been made prisoner, and now his own enemies—may their fathers be cursed!—had taken advantage of his brother's downfall to poison the Amir's mind against him, and he was told that if he returned to Kabul it was probable the Amir would kill him. So he had thought it over, and concluded that it was better he should go back to Karachi and

stay there with some friends until he could return with safety, and he asked me to help him in getting away by the next train.

To help in the running away of one of the chief officials of Kabul would have been a bad introduction for me to the Amir, and it seemed hard not to help a man to escape death, as he said, and he knew the Amir's ways; so, saying I would think it over and make inquiries about the trains, I left him, wondering how best to arrange the difficulty. I ascertained that there would be no train before nightfall, and at that time we were due at the Afghan camp across the frontier, so, as there was no necessity to take immediate steps in the matter, I went on with the work in hand.

At lunch time the English-speaking native, who had charge of the catering and other arrangements in connection with the prince's reception at Chaman, came to tell me that the Kotwal had also approached him about running away, and what should he do? I recognized that there was no help at hand, and so I impressed on him that whatever was done nothing must be known that we were concerned in the man's running away, pointing out the bad impression it would make on the Amir, and that the Government would no doubt institute inquiries and we should be blamed. So he went off, and came back with the Kotwal, and for a long time talked to him in Persian, of which I had little knowledge then, and, I believe, persuaded him that it was better that he should go

away that day to the Afghan camp, and get back during the night, or the following day, and he would leave one of his men to see him to Karachi. However, when I rode away that evening the Kotwal rode with me, and we reached the Afghan camp together, and he was one of the prince's retinue when we set out next day on the road to Kandahar.

Afterwards, although the prince received orders in Kandahar that he should be brought back to Kabul in chains, the Kotwal made his peace with the Amir, and continued for some time in the enjoyment of his position, which included torturing and killing people in horrible ways, and the acquisition of wealth by bribery and extortion, so that when he died of cholera some eight years later he was possessed of several lakhs of rupees. The day he died, I overheard some soldiers gloating over the fact that that night his soul would be roasting in hell, and I fancy some few thousand others derived consolation from the same thought, and knowing what I did of him myself, the fate the soldiers assigned him seemed not an improbable one.

According to the Afghan theory, the soul of a man is judged the night of the day he is buried, hence the delight of the soldiers over what would take place that night after the judgment had been pronounced.

The camp at each stopping-place looked rather imposing, and gave the impression of an immense gathering, as, besides the prince with his retinue and

THE SHAHZADA ON THE MARCH FROM KANDAHAR TO KABUL.

(From a drawing by the Author). [*To face p.* 8.

soldiers, were the men in charge of the baggage animals, who of themselves formed a rather large company, for the camels alone numbered half a thousand, so that the tents, horses, and camels covered a large tract of ground. After nightfall all the fires at which the men were cooking their food showed up clearly, and each fire had its quota of men busily superintending the pots and cooking arrangements generally, while others were standing or squatting round, watching and waiting the moment when, all being ready, they might fall to.

The noises of the camp at night were numerous, though there was never any rowdiness, for an Afghan crowd is the most orderly and quiet of any country, but there were the voices of officers giving orders, the squeals of horses fighting with one that had got loose (and there always seemed a loose horse about at night), the gurgling of the camels, the challenges of soldiers on guard in guttural Afghani, and the striking of gongs to announce the hour.

I remember one night, or rather early morning, when the guard over the gong had evidently been asleep and waked up suddenly, hearing sixteen strokes of the gong in rapid succession, although it was only half-past one. Whether this was the result of nightmare, or whether the man thought a little extra activity would better demonstrate his extreme wakefulness, I cannot say.

We were four days reaching Kandahar, for only on one day was the march at all a long one, the rest

being what they term "King's marches," in contradistinction to "Caravan marches." King's marches being short ones on account of the number of men, etc., to move. The distance from one camp to another is usually expressed as so many hours' journey. The horses on a journey go at a uniform pace, something between a quick walk and a jog-trot to which they are trained, and at which pace they can, when in condition, cover fifty to sixty miles in a day, though it is not customary to push them to that extent except in cases of necessity. Taking into consideration the mountainous description of country usually met with, the absence of proper roads, and the size of the horses (which average thirteen to fourteen hands), this is a fair distance.

They have a unit of distance in Afghanistan called a "kro," which is said by some to be equivalent to one and a half English miles, but as there are no recognized number of "guz" (yards) to the "kro" it assumes varying dimensions, according to individual taste. I once received a firman from the Amir, through the prince, to make a perambulating instrument for measuring roads which was to show distances on the index in guz and kro, and I wrote the prince to let me know the number of guz in a kro that I might arrange the necessary clockwork. He replied that he had made inquiries, and the number given by different persons so varied that he had written the Amir to fix a standard; but the Amir fell ill just then, and the matter remained in

abeyance, and the same indefiniteness still exists. The present Amir has distances measured in yards and miles.

Once when travelling from Kabul to Peshawar, and after being seven or eight hours in the saddle, I asked the sowars with me how far it was to the village by which we intended camping. One usually is rather interested in knowing how much farther one has to go after several hours' riding. He told me that it was between one to two kro ahead, but we did not get to camp until after three hours' further riding. So I henceforth made it a custom to inquire the distance in hours, and found it less disappointing.

On arriving within a few miles of Kandahar, the prince was met by the General commanding that district and the principal officers, who dismounted at a distance from him, and came up with heads uncovered. When they reached him they kissed his foot, and then, taking his hand between both of theirs, placed it on each eye in turn, and kissed it also; this being the Afghan custom when acknowledging their chief or swearing allegiance. Near the city the troops of the garrison were drawn up, together with the artillery, and the latter fired the royal salute as the prince rode up. The prince then inspected the troops, and addressed a few words to them, after which, followed by all the officers and officials, he repaired to the musjid for prayers, while I rode on to the city to find the quarters which had been allotted to me.

Under the Absolute Amir

The road *viâ* Kandahar is not one which is often used when travelling from India to Kabul, the road from Peshawar through the Khyber Pass being the direct route, and the journey by that road occupies about eight days when travelling with little luggage and doing forced marches, while the route *viâ* Kandahar and Ghazni takes three or four weeks. There are no roads for wheeled traffic, nor are there any railways, and one must either ride or be carried in a sort of sedan chair, suspended from the backs of two horses. The Afghan rulers are greatly prejudiced against railways, and if one but mentions such a scheme ulterior designs are at once suspected. Yet a proper scheme of railways to open up the country would make it rich and prosperous, and do away with the present universal poverty and misery.

The Shahzada on leaving Kabul for England had been sent *viâ* Peshawar by the late Amir, and arrangements had been made for him to return *viâ* Kandahar, in order that he might see as much as possible of the country. Since he came from Russia, a little boy of nine, he had never been more than a few miles out of Kabul, for the Amir did not encourage the members of his family to travel unless of necessity. The Amir also wished him to stop in Kandahar on his return journey to inquire into matters concerning its government, because for many years there had been complaints from the people of the oppression of the governors and absence of justice.

On the Road

I was told, while in Kandahar, that the Amir made the previous governors, when accepting office, sign a paper providing that, should they rob or oppress either rich or poor, they consented to be hanged, and it was significant that the last three or four governors had been hanged. The man who was governor when the prince arrived suddenly fell ill, and died a few days afterwards, and there were not wanting those who suggested self-destruction in order to escape worse happening.

Kandahar is situated in the middle of a fertile plain, or rather the plain would be fertile if irrigated and cultivated as it could be; but when I was there, there was little cultivation or signs of it, although the rivers carry plenty of water. On account of the small amount of rainfall in Afghanistan irrigation is necessary in order to make the land yield crops; and in some cases, to provide water for land which cannot be irrigated direct from the river, the people have sunk a series of wells leading from water-bearing strata to the land requiring irrigation, connecting the wells by underground ducts; the water from the last well being raised to the surface by means of a Persian wheel. This is a laborious process, and as the connecting ducts are not arched or protected in any way, the supply is frequently stopped by the earth falling in, and crops are ruined before the supply can be set going again.

I was asked to propose an irrigation scheme by which the whole of the surrounding land could be put

under cultivation, and gave my opinion; but, although the work was feasible, it involved too great an outlay for the exchequer, and the matter was dropped.

The city is not a large one, and is surrounded by a high wall, which, together with most of the buildings, is built of mud and stone, or mud and sun-dried brick. The whole place is in a most tumble-down condition, having been partially destroyed several times during the wars of the past twenty years and not rebuilt. It gave one the idea that the inhabitants were in the utmost poverty, and although some of the better houses and musjids are built of small burnt bricks and lime, yet in all is the same appearance of dilapidation which made one think that the people were humbled and lacked the heart to put their city to rights. Some of the streets in the bazars are raised above the surrounding land, so that one looks down into the tumble-down shops, where copper, tin, leather, and other trades are carried on in a small way.

One thing that struck me particularly when riding through the bazars was the small size of the donkeys, which are little bigger than a large mastiff. They are employed in carrying loads, and I saw many with such huge piles of grass on them that only the donkey's hoofs and a small portion of his head was visible. Ripe cases for the intervention of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

I was lodged in a small house, built in the form of a cross, and consisting of one room only, branching

out on four sides, this form being, I believe, copied from Russia. It was situated in the garden adjoining the house occupied by the prince, and as the weather was getting cold at night it was a decided improvement on a tent, although the architect had forgotten to include a fireplace. From the roof of the house I got a good view over most of the city, and could also see the minarets of the musjid in which is a sanctuary where any man, whatsoever his crime, is safe when once inside. There used to be similar sanctuaries in some old English churches.

The late Amir once told me a story of a moullah in Kandahar who had dubbed him a "Kafir" (infidel) when inciting the people to rise against him. They had to make him out a "Kafir," as otherwise it is against the religious law for the people to rise against the King, who is also their spiritual head. When the ensuing rebellion had been put down the Amir was told that this man had taken refuge in the sanctuary. Then the Amir, turning the tables on the man, said that the sanctuary was for Mussulmans only, not for such infidels as men who rose against their king; and, taking his sword, he went to the musjid and killed the man in the very place. It was little that stopped Abdur Rahman in the pursuit of vengeance.

CHAPTER II

ON THE ROAD—*continued*

Method of fishing in the rivers—Route through Khilat and Mukur to Ghazni and distance from Kandahar—Cold and snow on journey—Ghazni—Robberies and murders on roads before Amir Abdur Rahman's time—Villages and cultivation *en route*—Arrival in Kabul and reception of Sirdar Nasrullah by Amir.

AFTER spending a few days in the city of Kandahar the prince went out to a garden a few miles up the river to spend a couple of days in fishing. On the evening of our arrival the prince told his suite that the following day all must appear in Afghan costume, and that any one who came in English dress would be thrown into the adjoining river. The river was a shallow one, so it meant a ducking only. One of the men there suggested that I should be included, but was ruled out on the grounds that I wore the costume of my country. In order to afford amusement and please the prince, one or two men did go the next day in English dress, and were ducked, much to the merriment of all there.

About midday, the weather having cleared, the prince and the rest of us started up the river, walking along the banks, while horses were led by syces for fording branches of the river, or the river itself when

required. Two fishermen, casting their circular nets as they went, waded up the river, the party on the banks keeping well behind them so as not to disturb the fish before the nets were thrown. The bed of the river was covered with shingle and stones, with boulders jutting out here and there, and the water did not seem to exceed more than four feet in depth at any place, and, being the time of low water, it was perfectly clear. There was a good catch of fish, which in appearance very much resembled trout, some of them being four to five pounds in weight, but the flavour of the fish had little to recommend it.

The circular nets used by the fishermen are similar to those used by natives in India. They are ten to fourteen feet in diameter, and weighted round the circumference at short intervals with leaden pellets, while between the pellets are pockets into which a fish swimming under the net in an endeavour to escape gets his head, and his body too if not a large one, and is so prevented from escaping. To the centre of the net a long cord is attached.

The method of using the net is this: the end of the cord is fastened round the right wrist by a slip knot and the rest of the cord gathered up in coils which are held in the right hand. The net is then held up by the cord so that it may hang in regular folds, and one half of these folds are arranged consecutively over the left arm and the rest over the right, both arms being held out to

carry them, and care being taken to avoid one fold entangling with another. The hands grip the folds nearest them, and then, after one or two preliminary swings, the net is thrown forward, and outward, in such manner as to spread out and cover as large an area as the net is capable of before striking the water. On striking the water the weighted periphery sinks at once and encloses any fish within its area.

The principle of landing the fish netted may be explained by supposing a circular cloth with its circumference weighted at short intervals spread out on a table. If the centre of the cloth is taken and slowly lifted, the circumference of the cloth will drag in over the table towards the centre until it becomes massed together just before it is lifted clear. In the case of the net the weights round the circumference press against each other sufficiently to prevent fish falling through while it is lifted clear of the water on to the bank.

It is no easy matter to use this net without a good deal of practice, the gathering of the folds over the arms preliminary to throwing being particularly awkward, and seeming at first to require three hands at least. The Afghan fishermen are very expert in throwing it, and can make it assume circular, oblong, or triangular shapes, according to the requirements of the river or stream in which they are fishing and the rocks and other obstacles it is necessary the net should avoid when cast. But that is a refinement in throwing which requires some years' experience.

On the Road

In nets for catching large fish the weights are necessarily heavier than those intended for small ones, but a couple of hours' fishing with a light net will be found sufficient exercise for one day for those not accustomed to them. Those who find it necessary to fish for the sake of the catch and not for sport will find these nets useful.

The prince, after spending a couple of days in the garden, returned to the city, but not liking the house he had occupied there he went the next day to stop at the Munzil Bagh, a new palace the Amir had built a year or so before just outside the city walls. I was given a tent pitched in the adjoining garden, because the rooms of the place were large and few, and sufficient only for the accommodation of the Shahzada and his personal attendants.

While here, I fell ill with fever and dysentery, and having no English medicines with me I might have fared rather badly. The prince, however, on hearing that I was ill, sent his own hakeem, or doctor, to attend me, and this man did his best, and gave me every attention. I was not quite as grateful at the time as I ought to have been, for three times a day he brought me medicine in a two-pint glass filled to the brim with some bitter concoction and sat there while I drank it, and as part of his treatment was also to starve me until the disease passed, I felt in rather a hurry to get better. Towards the end of my illness, however, I persuaded him to send the medicine to me and not to put himself to the trouble of bringing it,

and then I found a convenient crack in the dry earth under my bed which absorbed the bulk of the liquid better than I could, and I am inclined to think that taking medicine in the Afghan manner is more or less an acquired habit. When I was convalescent, this hakeem selected all food that was to be cooked for me, and did so in such generous quantities that, after my enforced fast, I was in danger of getting ill in other ways. I really ought to have been more grateful, for he was very conscientious, and liberal too, and took the greatest interest in my case.

When I was well again I rode about the country around a good deal and found plenty of partridge and quail shooting, and I heard that deer could be got further away; but as it involved the trouble of camping out for a night or two I did not think it worth while to try my luck, and camping out with a small escort was hardly advisable.

One day I came across an abandoned gold mine, which I had previously heard the people speak of as yielding large quantities of gold in its time. A huge hole had been blasted out of the mountain-side, and heaps of *débris* were scattered about, in some parts entirely filling up previous excavations. The quartz veins had been mined in all directions, but the gold had evidently been in a "pocket," and there was nothing further to be had. I had a great desire for an opportunity of thoroughly trying the place myself, and while I pottered about the sowar escort with me

broke up lumps of quartz to see what they might find. Gold exercises a fascination over most people.

A sowar escort of seven men, with their duffedar (sergeant), had been appointed to attend me wherever I went from the day I crossed the frontier, and, as the penalty, should a fanatic attack and kill me, was death to themselves, they kept very close to me and left nothing whatever to chance.

The prince spent about a month in Kandahar and was getting rather gloomy at the thought of being kept there for the winter, for it was getting on towards the end of November, when one evening I went to pay my compliments, or salaam him, as they call it, and met him coming into the durbar room as I got there. I saw that he was very pleased and excited, and he called out, "How do you do?" (almost all the English he knew) when he saw me, and shook hands, which was a thing he seldom did, and then told me that the Amir's firman had been received, and he was to go on at once to Kabul. I made a remark about it being rather cold weather for travelling, and he assured me pleasantly that on the march it would be twenty times colder than in Kandahar. As the water in my tent froze every night I saw nothing to congratulate myself upon; however, the prospect of being on the move again was exhilarating.

That evening the prince had some musicians brought in. They played upon instruments made of some sort of cane or bamboo, which rather resemble

the flute, and although Afghan music is not usually soothing to the Western ear, I found the music these men played rather pleasant and lively. The instruments they used are peculiar to Kandahar, I was told, and the prince wanted one of the men to accompany him to Kabul; but the man was not attracted by the idea, and managed to evade the invitation.

The Shahzada left Kandahar the following week, the intervening time being taken up in preparations for the journey, although such preparation might easily have been completed in half the time; but it is not the habit of the people to rush things. Their custom is, instead, to put off all they can until to-morrow, or the day after, that for preference. The first day's camp was only twelve miles or so out of Kandahar, for it is customary always to make the first day's march a short one, in order to prepare the horses and pack animals for the ensuing journey, and it affords a means of testing the arrangements of the march generally.

The route to Kabul lay through Khilat, Mukur, and Ghazni. The road as far as Khilat, which took four days' journey, runs in a north-easterly direction, and mostly alongside the river, which flows down towards Kandahar from the mountains beyond. The track rises gradually over a rather flat country, but there are mountain ranges at a little distance on both sides. Beyond that to Mukur, another four days' journey, the road skirts the foot of some mountain

ranges, and forms a fair road for travelling without any difficult passes to get over.

From Mukur to Ghazni it runs over a high table-land, with mountain ranges on either side, which, running in the same direction, give it the appearance of an immense roadway. It took four days to cross this and get to Ghazni, and it was by far the coldest part of the journey, for the wind was icy, and its keenness such that it pierced the thickest clothing I had. Although the sun was bright during the day it had no warmth, and the surrounding mountains were covered with snow, but it was not until the day before we reached Ghazni that snow fell, and made sleeping under canvas more unpleasant than it had been. It came on at night, and when I awoke in the morning I found it covering the boxes in my tent and my bed too, for the wind had blown the flap of the tent open and allowed the snow to drift in. It was chilly dressing before the sun was up, and as my clothes, which I had thrown over a chair, were also covered with snow, I had to get dry ones out of my boxes, the while being lightly clad in a night-suit and slippers.

That day's march to Ghazni was a trying one. Before this the days had been bright and the air dry, but the moisture given out by the snow made the wind still more biting, and we had to dismount occasionally to bring some feeling into hands and feet, and to rub noses and ears to prevent frostbite. Many of the Afghans wore hoods shaped like

Balaklava caps which left only the eyes exposed, and I thought them a very sensible protection against such severe weather, and wished I had one.

The snow made the ground very slippery, and many horses fell. The camels were worse off in that respect than the horses, for their broad flat feet, which slide in all directions on a wet road, are ill-adapted for travelling over snow, and, being also heavily laden, they sooner or later came down, some of them breaking their legs and having to be killed. As, however, camel flesh is an article of diet they were not a literal dead loss to their owners.

Outside Ghazni the Shahzada was met by the officers and officials there, who brought him presents of cloth, horses, and money, and when the city was reached the royal salute was fired by the artillery, which, with several horse regiments, was drawn up to receive him. He afterwards went into the city, where he held durbar for a couple of hours before coming on to the camp, which was pitched outside the walls.

Ghazni is situated in a small valley almost surrounded with low hills. It is a very small place, and is enclosed by a high wall, as all towns and villages in Afghanistan are. It has nothing about it to show that it was once the royal city and the home of emperors. There are no fine buildings, and its streets are very narrow and dirty, and the bazars far from good. It boasts a bala-hisar (high fort) which commands the surrounding land, but which itself could

SIRDAR MAHOMED OMAR KHAN AND STAFF.

[*To face p.* 24.

be commanded from the neighbouring heights with the guns of the present day.

Up to Ghazni the march was forced in order to get over the worst part of the journey before the middle of December, when the heavy falls of snow usually commence, for the table-land which has to be crossed before reaching Ghazni is well known to those who travel that way, and many have been overtaken by snow and perished there. Consequently each day's march was a fairly long one, and one day was close on forty miles, which for a Shahzada is looked upon as a good distance. I had been unused to riding for some months before, and at first was rather saddle-sore, but soon got hardened.

On some of the longer marches the prince rode most of the distance on camels, and on those occasions I went on ahead to escape the dust and discomfort of the extra pace, for a riding camel's trot is very trying to keep up with on horseback. Being ahead, I was able to trot or canter over the best bits of road and walk the others, but the disadvantage of forcing the pace lay in having to wait three or four hours after reaching camp for the baggage animals to come in with tents and servants, and then another hour or so for food to be prepared. Usually, I got my lunch any time between four and nine o'clock in the evening, and I found that waiting about in a bitter wind for several hours without tent or food was very cold work, particularly when tired after a long ride. While riding, my feet

were generally so numbed with cold that they had no feeling, and in camp in the evenings the coldness increased to such an extent that water thrown on the ground froze immediately, and my khansaman showed me that knives dipped in water came out with a thin film of ice on them, so that after nightfall when the wind was at its bitterest, as the temperature fell lower and lower, one was glad to get into bed as soon as possible to get warm.

One evening I had a hole dug in the floor of the tent and a fire made in it, but in less than two minutes I was outside, coughing, while my eyes were streaming, and I had to wait outside in the cold for some time until the wind had cleared the tent of smoke. After that I got a munkal, or iron dish that stands on four legs, and had a fire made in that outside the tent, and when the wood had burnt away until nothing but glowing cinders were left, I had it brought inside, and found that it made the place more comfortable. Before going to sleep, when nothing but hot ashes were left in the munkal, I used to put it under the bed, and found a material increase in warmth there, for I had no mattress, and slept on rezais (quilted coverlets), which were not altogether impervious to the icy wind which came in under the walls of the tent and played under the bed.

We passed several villages on the way, some perched halfway up a mountain and some in the valley below, but all surrounded by high walls for protection. Gardens and cultivated land lay outside

the villages, and as we rode past, some of the big Afghan dogs, which rather resemble a St. Bernard, would come tearing out, barking, and looking savage enough and big enough to eat one. They are fierce brutes, and often try to pull a passing traveller out of the saddle; but they need be big and savage, for they are used principally as sheepdogs, and on occasion have to attack and kill wolves.

The people in the country are mostly robbers, and in the days before Amir Abdur Rahman took the country in hand, travellers fared badly, unless they kept together in bands of thirty or more, for even poor men travelling alone have been known to be killed for the sake of the clothes they wore.

There are many stories told of the treatment offered travellers by villagers in outlying districts, and one case was that of a poor man who was going along carrying a sack on his shoulders, and was seen by one of these robbers, who, thinking that the sack must contain something valuable, waited behind a rock until the man got within range, and then fired and killed him; but on the robber going over to his victim, and opening the bag, he found in it nothing but dried dung (used as fuel by the poor classes), whereupon, bewailing the waste of his cartridge, he kicked the body and strode off. I was told of another case where thirteen men who were travelling during the winter were stopped and robbed of all they possessed, the villagers even stripping them of the

clothes they had on, and leaving them to perish in the cold.

The Amir's method of putting this sort of robbery and murder down was simple and effective. If a man was robbed or killed, all villages within a radius of about ten miles of the place where the crime was perpetrated were fined from twenty to fifty thousand rupees, and if the people failed to pay up promptly, two or three regiments of soldiers were sent and quartered on them until payment was effected. When an Afghan soldier is quartered on any one, he takes the best of everything in the house, the best bed, best room, and best food, and if there are no fowl or sheep the man of the house must procure them at once, even if he has to sell all he has to get them. If he does not do this, then the butt end of a rifle is applied to the small of his back, or even worse befalls. The villager had no redress, because it is a Government soldier doing his duty. In this way the Government fines are paid in as quickly as possible, for each day's delay means a great loss to each house in the village.

The effect of the Amir's policy was to make each villager chary of allowing his neighbour to molest a traveller, as all suffered alike for the crime of one, and at the time I passed over the road, a single traveller might go all the way from Kandahar to Kabul without being unduly troubled. That is, provided he was not a foreigner, and Persians and Hindustanis come under that category, for such

have no friends to make complaints to the Government and cause bothersome inquiries, and are, therefore, looked upon as fair sport.

The road from Khilat is fairly level until it nears Ghazni, when it falls down towards it, and then beyond Ghazni it rises again over the Darwaza Ghazni pass, and beyond that falls again towards Kabul.

Between Ghazni and Kabul, the country, being at a much lower altitude than that already passed over, the weather was much milder; but there was snow on the hills around, and the temperature at night was below freezing-point. We were five days travelling over this part of the road, and the country passed through was rather hilly; but it was well cultivated in the valleys, and there were many small villages about.

The road from Chaman to Kandahar, and thence to Kabul, could readily be made fit for wheeled traffic, and would offer no difficulties to the construction of a railway, and the fact that the two heavy siege guns, presented to the Amir by the Indian Government, were taken that way and drawn by traction engines shows sufficiently the ease with which a good road might be made.

When we arrived at Kila Durani we were only ten or twelve miles from Kabul as the crow flies, but had to go on round by the pass some twenty miles farther on. Close by this village we passed over one of the English battlefields with mounds of

stones piled up over those who had fallen. Seated on one of these mounds of stones I noticed a very old man rocking his body backwards and forwards and muttering to himself, and when I had gone on a little distance I heard one of the soldiers behind shout, and turning round saw this old man following me with a huge stone, which he could hardly carry. The sowars with me laughingly told him that the Amir Sahib would imprison him if he tried to kill me; but the old man said that the English had killed his son and he would kill an Englishman in return. It was more pathetic than laughable to see this poor old man gone mad through losing his son some years before, and carrying a stone he was unable to throw to take vengeance. It, however, typifies the character of the people.

When we reached Kila Kazee, which is about eight miles from Kabul, we had to camp there for three days so that the prince might ride into Kabul on the Sunday following, that being an auspicious day according to the astrologers, who are always consulted on these matters.

The day we got into camp Sirdar Habibullah Khan (the present Amir) rode out to see his brother, and spent the night with him, returning to Kabul the following day. Sirdar Mahomed Omar also came to see him, and as he is the son of the Queen-Sultana, and was about ten years old at the time, the prince ordered a display of fireworks that night in order to please him. Sirdar is the title, equivalent to prince,

conferred on the Amir's sons only, although the people use it when addressing other members of the royal family, as a term of respect.

On the Sunday the prince and his suite rode into Kabul, dressed in the best they had for the occasion, and all cheerful at the thought of being home at last. About halfway a large shamiana was erected, and here the Shahzada's son, a little child of two years, together with the sons of Sirdar Habibullah Khan, were waiting to meet him. The prince seemed a good deal affected on seeing his child, which rather surprised me, as I had always thought him very unemotional. We spent an hour or so sitting under the shamiana while tea and refreshments were served, and then rode on.

Outside the city of Kabul, on an open space close to the workshops, several regiments and two or three batteries of artillery were drawn up, and in front of the troops was Sirdar Habibullah, together with the General commanding the Kabul troops, and other officers, who were waiting to receive the prince and accompany him to the Salaam khana. On the Shahzada's approach the guns fired the royal salute, and then, when the different officers had come up and saluted the prince, they all rode on together towards the city. Thousands of people lined the roads to watch the tamasha, and soldiers were stationed at intervals to keep the people back and leave a clear road for the princes and others to pass.

The Amir was holding a public durbar to receive

his son, safely returned after travelling so far, and on arrival the prince dismounted at the gate and walked through the gardens to the Salaam khan, where, having been announced to the Amir, he walked up the durbar hall and, kneeling, took his father's hand in both his and, placing it on each eye in turn, kissed it, while invoking blessings and giving the usual salutations. The Amir, raising the prince, told him to be seated, and then for the rest of the day there were rejoicings, and all officials and officers came in turn to the durbar to salaam the Amir and give thanks for the safe return of his son.

CHAPTER III

KABUL

The Mihman khana or Guest-house—Description of hamams (Turkish baths)—Description of people met with on roads and streets—Amir Abdul Rahman—Description of palace and audience chamber, and his reception of me—Situation of Kabul and description of country around—Kabul city, its bazars, streets, and filth—Water-supply and drainage systems—Sanitary arrangements—Pariah dogs and crows scavenging city.

On the morning after my arrival, I was walking in the garden when the court interpreter came to tell me that the Amir Sahib had ordered that I was to be favoured with an interview that afternoon. This was my second visit to Kabul, and I was no stranger to the Amir, who had the gift of not forgetting any one he once saw.

The Amir had given orders that I was to be treated with great honour and courtesy, and the house in which I had been given quarters was the new Mihman khana or Guest-house, in which the Amir himself had been stopping until a few days before. It is an extensive square building with large rooms, originally intended for one of the Amir's summer palaces, and is situated on the outskirts of the new city. An extensive garden surrounds the

house, and the whole is enclosed by a high wall, and in one of the walls is a covered gateway, on either side of which are rooms for the use of the outer guard. Outhouses are built on the inner side of the wall for the use of the servants, and at the end of the outhouses is the kitchen, and adjoining that the hamam (Turkish bath), without which, no large house in Kabul is considered complete. It was in this hamam that I had the day before enjoyed the first comfortable bath since leaving Kandahar.

The hamam consists of two rooms, one opening into the other, with domed roofs, the floors flagged with large stone slabs, and the ceilings and walls plastered with cement. The rooms are heated from a fireplace built outside, the flue from which branches out under the inner chamber, and up through the walls of the outer one. The wall at the fireplace end of the inner chamber is double, and the intervening space is occupied by two cisterns, the one for hot water being immediately over the fire, and the other for cold water alongside it, and pipes fitted with taps convey the water to the inner room. The inner chamber is the hot one, and is used for ablutions, while the outer one is for cooling down in and dressing. It is not advisable to spend too much time in these hamams, as the air, for want of proper ventilation, is rather foul, and also, as the stone flags are not too well jointed, the gases from the fire get in, so that a prolonged visit generally ends in a bad headache. They are, nevertheless, a great

convenience in the cold weather, which is much more severe than the average English winter, but they take about two days' firing to get properly heated, and must be fired every day if wanted for regular use. Once heated, however, it requires but little fuel to keep the temperature up.

Accompanied by the translator, I rode off soon after midday to keep the appointment made by the Amir, but about halfway to the palace we were met by a messenger bringing a note. It was from the Amir, saying, that as he had risen late, he would not be able to see me at the appointed time, and therefore told me to come an hour later. To have a letter putting off the appointment to a later hour is an extreme mark of honour, for usually when one is ordered to be present at an appointed time, one has to sit and wait if the Amir is not ready to receive.

I spent the intervening hour in riding about the streets and roads on the outskirts of the city, where the palaces of the Amir and princes are situated, and where the officials and courtiers and others have their houses and gardens. This part, which lies to the north-west of the old city, is generally called Deh Afghanan, from a small village of Afghan people which lies in that direction; and here the roads are broad and well laid out, but at that time they were not metalled, and after rain or snow, the horses' feet sank inches deep in mud and slush, and pedestrians had to walk warily. At the present time the principal roads round Kabul are metalled, and riding

or walking is not the mud-besplashing process it once was.

The people met with were unwashed and unkempt in appearance. Even those who were apparently high in rank, and came along the road on horseback, with five or six servants running beside them, looked as though they had washed their faces just before leaving the house, and had forgotten to wash their necks. The clean, fresh look of those who bathe regularly was missing, and, although I found afterwards that the better classes bathe but once a week or less, and the others once in a few months, it may, perhaps, be the dark sallow skin of the neck which gives the unwashed appearance. Also the dress of the people being part English and part Afghan, and their habit of putting on a clean shirt once a week only adds to the appearance of untidyness, and makes them look as though a good all-over scrubbing would do them good.

The Amir was stopping in the Boistan Serai, a small palace built outside the gardens which surround the fortified palace of Arak, and alongside the Queen-Sultana's palace, which is called the Gulistan Serai. Boistan and Gulistan both signify garden, the translation of the former being "place of scents," and the latter, "place of flowers." Kabul itself might be termed "boistan" in another sense, which a ride through its bazars would indicate.

On my arrival, with the interpreter, at the gate of the palace, the captain of the guard there conducted

us to an inner court, where we waited while the Amir was informed by the officer on duty that I was present; and on the Amir ordering that I wasto be admitted, they conducted me into his presence.

On entering the audience chamber I saw the Amir seated on the side of the couch he used as a bed. He was dressed in an English grey tweed suit, and on his head was the Afghan silk fez, with the royal diamond star at the side of it. The Amir suffered a good deal from gout, and preferred the side of his bed for sitting on, as being more comfortable than a chair, and also, if not feeling well, he was able to stretch himself on the bed, and rest himself, without the trouble of first getting up from a chair.

In appearance the Amir looked about forty-five years of age, although nearer sixty, and this was due to his hair and beard being died black, making him look younger than he was. In person he was very stout and broad, with a rather long body, and short legs. His eyes were very dark, almost black, and looked out from under his heavy brows with quick, keen glances, while in complexion he was sallow, but his skin was not darker than the average Portuguese. The Amir had a full set of false teeth, and these he would take out at times and polish with his handkerchief, while continuing to speak, but the difference in his pronunciation made it difficult to follow him. He once handed his teeth to me to examine, and explained that one of his own men had made them for him, having learnt the art from an English dentist.

Around the Amir were slave boys ready to attend his least want, and in front of him, standing round about the room, were officers and officials, and at the door were two men of the royal body-guard with bayonets fixed, while the captain of the guard, carrying an unsheathed sword, stood by them.

The audience chamber was a large one, and the floor was covered with fine Persian carpets, but it was bare of furniture, save the velvet-covered armchairs and small round-topped tables which were ranged at intervals along the wall round the room. On the walls were oil paintings representing landscapes only, for figure paintings are not allowed in a room where prayers are said, and this applies to all rooms, for Mussulmans say their prayers wherever they may happen to be, and the reason for this is, they say, that to pray before a pictured figure would give the appearance of idolatry.

Walking up the durbar room I stood before the Amir, and bowed; and he asked, according to the usual greeting, if I was well, and took off his glove to shake hands (the gout in his right hand necessitated his wearing a glove in cold weather), saying that it was not etiquette among the English to shake hands with gloves on, and then, after the many salutations usual in Persian, he told me to be seated, and thereafter talked to me for several hours, and told me anecdotes of his career and life in Russia, and generally showed me honour in the gracious courtly

manner he could so well assume when it pleased him.

After sitting down, a small table was placed near me, and tea, fruit, and cigarettes were brought in. My tea was served in a Russian cup, which consisted of a glass tumbler fixed in a gold holder with handle, and carried on a gold saucer, a fashion the Amir had adopted from the Russians.

When with the Amir on an occasion like this, it was unnecessary to talk one's self. The Amir did all the talking, and all he required of one was to listen and answer shortly, except when some matter required full explanation, and then he would listen very attentively. In relating anything humorous he would laugh very heartily, sometimes rolling on his bed, but, whether serious or laughing, the Amir was always the king, and there was that about him which forbade any one taking advantage of his humour. When roused to anger his face became drawn, and his teeth would show until he looked wolfish, and then he hissed words rather than spoke them, and there were few of those before him who did not tremble when he was in that mood, for it was then that the least fault involved some horrible punishment. It was also in these moods that the Amir would remember the former offences of those whom he had marked down for punishment, and he would take advantage of any trifling neglect of duty or other small offence to inflict a heavy punishment, so that the feelings of those present

on these occasions may be imagined, for none knew what the Amir had in his mind against them on account of former misdemeanours.

When in the Amir's presence no one ever ventured to speak unless asked a question, or else they caught his eye and received an inquiring look and the upward nod of interrogation characteristic of him. The page-boys moved about quietly and noiselessly in the execution of their duty, coming in and going out as they wished, but always careful that several of their number remained near the Amir.

While I was with the Amir, Sirdar Nasrullah Khan, whom I had accompanied from London, came in, and, after salaaming his father, was told to take a chair. A chair was always offered to either of his elder sons when they came to visit him, as they did most days if only for a short time, excepting on those occasions when they were in disgrace or the Amir in a bad humour, and then they were not asked to take a seat, and had to remain standing. When the younger princes visited him they would stand behind his chair or couch and act as the ordinary page-boys did, handing him anything he wanted, and waiting on him generally. When the princes wanted to go away they would again salaam their father and walk out, no permission being asked or required.

To be allowed to sit in the Amir's presence is a sign of great favour and an honour accorded to few, and chiefs and high officials when asked to sit down,

AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN IN EVERYDAY DURBAR. SIRDAR HABIBULLAH (PRESENT AMIR) SITTING WITH HIM.
(From a drawing by the Author.)

[*To face p.* 40.

would do so on the floor, sitting with their backs against the wall, and if many were present they would sit in a line along the wall on either side of the Amir, those highest in rank or favour being nearest him.

After spending some hours with the Amir, I asked permission to leave, and as I stood up to go he told me I was to come to him the next day, and very often after that, for he wished to see much of me. His asking me to come often was another mark of extreme honour, and showed that I enjoyed great favour, and there is nothing an ambitious man in that country covets so much as being allowed often in the Amir's presence, and there is a good deal of scheming done to be able to do so. For one thing, it is a sign of the highest favour and confidence, and for another all men regard that man as one to be fawned on and flattered; and although he may be hated by the envious, he is also feared, and becomes a man of consequence.

The next two months or so I spent in the Mihman khana (Guest-house), occupying myself in preparing a scheme for the development of the resources of the country, which the Amir had asked me to write. He was good enough to give me very high praise for it, but very few of the proposals embodied in the scheme were carried out. I also rode a good deal about the surrounding country, and through the bazars of the city, for there is little else to do as a means of recreation.

Under the Absolute Amir

Kabul is situated in the midst of a large valley, surrounded with mountains at distances varying from fifteen to twenty miles. The small ranges of hills, which rise up out of the plain here and there, give a broken-up appearance to the country, so that the whole of the valley is not discernible except from a height. One of these ranges, the Sher Darwaza (Lion of the gate), is immediately south of the city, and on the west rise the Asman Heights. Between the two the Kabul river flows, coming from the south-west. Along the crest of the heights is an old wall, mostly in ruins, and built in the usual way of mud and stone. It follows the undulations of the summits, and running down to the pass through which the river flows, it rises up again and winds along the heights on the opposite side. Formerly, the wall crossed the river by means of a brick bridge, but there is nothing to be seen of the bridge now except the ruined abutments. This wall was built many years ago as a protection against the raids of the wild tribes inhabiting the country south-west of Kabul, who frequently fell upon the city in great numbers, putting the people to the sword and carrying off all the loot they could get, including women and cattle, both of which are looked upon in much the same light in Afghanistan.

The country round Kabul is well cultivated, and as there is little rainfall irrigation is resorted to for watering the crops. Trees have of late years been planted along most of the roads leading from the

city, and some are to be seen in the walled-in gardens which dot the plain here and there, but on the hills round about the absence of trees and vegetation makes them look very bare and desolate by contrast.

The city contains some hundred and fifty to a hundred and sixty thousand inhabitants, and, like all other cities in the country, is walled-in. On the north-west side the city has overgrown itself, and here the palaces of the Amir and princes and houses of the officials and well-to-do people are built. Deh Afghanan, which gives its name to the new portion of the city, also lies on this side, and is yearly growing larger, for all who can leave the old portion of the city do so, and build houses and live in the fashionable quarter.

The streets of the city are narrow and winding, and are mostly paved with round cobble stones of varying sizes and badly laid, and in the interstices between the stones a horse sometimes gets its hoof and lames itself. The roadways are sloped from the houses on either side towards the centre for the purpose of drainage, and refuse is thrown out into the street from the houses, and lies where it falls and rots, so that the stench on occasions when there is little wind is particularly trying.

The houses and shops are built of sun-dried brick and clay, with flat roofs formed of timbers stretching from wall to wall which are covered with grass mats, over which a thick layer of clay is laid. The floors of the rooms are of the same materials, and the houses

are small and packed close together. The upper stories of the houses in the wider bazars jut out over the streets, the ends of the overhanging beams being supported by wooden struts. In the narrower streets the upper stories cover the road entirely, forming dark crooked passages of unpleasant odour through which it is best to pick one's way with a light. The widest bazars are about fifteen feet in width, and the narrowest about four feet, and as pack horses and camels carrying loads are to be met with all over the city, it is often a matter of difficulty to avoid being swept out of the saddle when riding past them. The strings of loaded camels are worse than the pack-horses in this respect, for the camel has no thought for others, and sticks to the middle of the street, its load projecting far on either side, and necessitating a horseman stretching himself flat along the back of his horse to get past, and it is in the narrowest part of a bazar that one meets these obstructions more often than not.

Streams of water led from a higher level up the river run alongside the street through most of the bazars for the use of the inhabitants. The water is good enough where it enters the city, but as it goes on it gathers impurities of all sorts. Refuse and filth from the houses find their way into it, people sit and wash themselves in it, and dead bodies, too, are washed in the same stream without thought of the disease which caused death. By the time the water reaches the Bala Hisar side of the city its quality may be

imagined, and yet this is the water the inhabitants have to use for drinking and cooking purposes. In cholera and other epidemics it is in that portion of the city which the water reaches last where the disease rages most, and no doubt it is the washing of the bodies of people dead of the disease in the same water used by others for drinking which accounts for a good deal of the spread and long stay of those epidemics which visit Kabul periodically and carry off so many thousands of its inhabitants.

Shortly before Amir Abdur Rahman's death he instituted a system of latrines in the city with donkeys to carry away the soil, selling the latter to those cultivators who required it. This did much to sweeten the city, but as all private houses could not be included in the scheme because only the larger houses have refuse-shoots built up against the outside wall whence the soil could be carried away, and no strange man may enter a house where women are, there was still a good deal left to be desired. The present Amir, during the cholera epidemic of 1903, had all the streets of the city swept and cleaned daily by an army of sweepers, and this was a step in the right direction, but with the necessity for cleanliness removed orientals soon fall back into their happy-go-lucky habits.

With the quantity of refuse thrown out of some thirty thousand houses daily the city of Kabul would soon become impossible to live in, but for the scavenging work done by the dogs and crows, who

are the unconscious remedy of the evil, and prevent the city becoming uninhabitable. I was told that one of the former Amirs had all bazar dogs killed, and the occasion was remembered, because soon afterwards a bad epidemic of cholera visited the city. The present Amir also gave orders for all bazar dogs to be killed, and the bulk of them were despatched, and then a few months later the cholera epidemic of 1903 broke out and was noted for its virulence.

CHAPTER IV

KABUL—*continued*

How streets are governed—City magistrate—Robberies and murders—Bazar shops—Style of palaces and better-class houses—Climate of Kabul.

EACH kochee or bazar in Kabul (streets with or without shops are called bazars) has a kilantar or headman whose duty it is to report to the Kotwal (city magistrate) all births and deaths in his street, keep order among the inhabitants, see that the street is kept clean, and to govern it generally; and he is held responsible for any lawlessness that occurs.

Soon after the death of the late Amir there were many robberies in different parts of the city, and all efforts to trace the thieves were unavailing. In some cases a man who shut up his shop and house and spent the night with a friend would return home in the morning to find the whole contents of the shop looted. So many similar cases occurring it was evident that the thieves were well informed of the movements of the householder they intended robbing. In other cases the owners were awakened by the noise made, and in an endeavour to protect their property were wounded or killed by the thieves, and, at last, the inhabitants were in a state of terror, while in the

bazars nothing was talked of but the robberies and murders. The Amir was petitioned, and he offered a large reward to any one giving information of the robbers, but without result.

Eventually, a shopkeeper who was sleeping, as is usual at night in fine weather, on the roof together with one of his relatives, both with swords on account of the fear prevailing, was awakened by two of the robbers stumbling over him after climbing up to the roof from the outside. He sprang up and raised an outcry, and his relative jumping up too, they made at the robbers with their swords ; but the latter, firing their pistols at them, ran off. The shopkeeper, although wounded, ran after them and managed to cut one of the men across the arm with his sword and then seized him, and in the struggle that ensued continued to call for help, until at length some neighbours hurried in and helped him to secure the thief. The relative, however, lay dead, shot through the heart. In the morning the robber was taken to the Kotwal who, by the Amir's order, applied different tortures in order to make him confess the names of his confederates. Some thirty names were so obtained, and the men were caught and made prisoners, and among them was a kilantar (headman) and one or two Kotwali sepoys (police). The latter, by giving the password of each night to the gang, had enabled them to pass the street guards without question, and made it easy for the robbers to visit any house they desired, and get back to their own houses before daybreak.

THE MIHMAN KHANA (GUEST-HOUSE), KABUL.

PORTION OF GARDEN ATTACHED TO MY HOUSE—SAINT'S GRAVE IN THE CORNER OF GARDEN.

[*To face p.* 48.

The houses where the stolen goods were stored were also made known, and a large quantity of jewellery, carpets, shawls, copper utensils, and other articles were obtained, from which any of the persons robbed were allowed to take those articles belonging to them on giving proof of ownership. Of the robbers, five were blown from the gun, some were blinded, and the others were imprisoned for life.

In Kabul a bugle sounds the "wardi" between eight and nine o'clock every night from each police station, and it is sounded again in the morning at sunrise. Between those hours no person is allowed to go about the streets without giving the password for the night, and should any one be found who is unable to do so, he is detained in the guard-room until morning, when he is taken before the Kotwal, who fines or releases him according to the quality of the excuse given.

The bazar shops are very small, the greater number of them being about a huckster's stall in size. The front of the shop is open, and at night it is shuttered and padlocked. There are no glass doors or windows, for glass is too rare and costly except for the Amir's palaces. The plinth of the wall projects in front of the shop into the street, and on this the shopkeeper sits, with his goods ranged on the floor and shelves of the room behind him. The goods offered for sale are principally grain, fruit, vegetables, sugar, and other provisions, cloth and cotton goods, shawls, boots, and articles of

apparel, leather goods, copper, tin, and iron utensils, etc. There are tea shops where a man can get a small pot of tea for less than a halfpenny, but if he takes sugar with it he has to pay about a farthing extra.

In the bazars are also letter-writers, for the use of those who cannot write themselves, who charge a halfpenny to a penny for each letter written, the stamp, of course, being extra. The principal bazars are named after the article mostly sold there; such as Gandam Farosh (wheat bazar), Zaghal Farosh (charcoal), Kunah Farosh (old curios), etc. Revolver and rifle cartridges can be obtained also, but are expensive, ranging from two to four cartridges for a shilling, according to size and demand.

The better-class houses are usually built of sun-dried brick and mud; there is a good deal of wood-work about them, and sometimes the whole front of a house is built up of wood. There are two parts to each house. The inner part is the harem serai, where the women are quartered, and here the rooms are built in such form as to surround and look out upon an inner courtyard; and an outer small house, which is built over the gate of the harem and overlooks the street, for the use of the man, and where male visitors are received and entertained by him. The largest houses have also a garden attached to them, which is surrounded by a high wall to insure privacy when the women walk in it, for no woman must allow her face to be seen

by any man excepting only her nearest relations. The door leading to the women's quarters in all houses has a kopchee or door-keeper, and no one is allowed to enter any house until its master has given permission, and no woman is allowed to leave the house unless the kopchee has been told by the master to permit it.

The palaces of the Amir and princes are the only well-built houses in Kabul. The Amir's principal palace is Arak. Arak signifies "fort" in Turki, and "palace" in Persian. It is a large fortified place, some five hundred yards square, and is surrounded by a deep and wide moat. The surrounding walls are double and very thick. The outer walls are loop-holed for cannon and Maxims, while an earthen embankment, carried on arches connecting the two walls, is sloped up from above the embrasures to the inner wall, the top of which is slotted for riflemen. Under this embankment are the rooms where the guns are worked. Inside the fort offices and storerooms are built up against the inner walls, together with rooms for the men of the garrison who form the Amir's bodyguard, and are specially selected and highly paid. In the Arak fort are also the public and private treasuries, and all the modern rifles and cartridges, of which there are many thousands, are kept in the storerooms there. The Amir's palace inside Arak, and the harem serai for his women, are both surrounded by a high wall, which forms an inner defence when so required, and besides these

are other rooms for the Amir's use, which have lately been built alongside the north tower, and at other places inside the fort. The inner area of the fort is laid out as a garden, and at one end of the garden is a large glass-covered hothouse where the Amir sits very often in winter, surrounded by shrubs and flowers, and with bulbuls and other singing birds in cages suspended from the roof.

Outside Arak are situated the Boistan and Gulistan palaces. While of the summer palaces, Shahrara (city's adornment) lies about a mile to the north-west of the city, and a couple of miles further on lies Baghibala (high garden), which was the late Amir's favourite summer palace and where he died. More to the west, and about eighteen miles out of the city, is the summer palace at Paghman, a green spot at the foot of the Hindu Kush mountains. South of Kabul, and about one and a half miles from the city, is Baber, where another summer residence has been built beside the tomb of Baber Shah, the first of the Moghul emperors, who was buried there in 1530. Six miles out in the same direction is Hindeki, where the present Amir has a summer palace, which he used before coming to the throne. A little to the south-west of Hindeki lies Kila Asham Khan, where the summer palace of the Queen-Sultana of the late Amir is situated.

In the gardens outside Arak are two large salaam khana (audience chambers) which were built by the

late Amir to afford room for large public durbars. These, in addition to the audience chambers proper, have smaller rooms attached to them, and the late Amir was in the habit of spending several days together in the new salaam khana, which is a handsome building.

The Kabul climate is a good one, and very bracing. Situated as it is some seven thousand feet above sea level, the air is rare, and it is, of course, much colder than other places on the same latitude. At first, one experiences a little difficulty in breathing when walking uphill, and is inclined to doubt the efficiency of one's lungs, but this wears off afterwards. I once climbed up the Hindu Kush to the limit of the snow in summer, and found the air very exhilarating and fresh; but I had to stop frequently to recover breath, and the air I breathed seemed altogether insufficient and not satisfying, like that at a lower altitude.

Although there is usually very little rainfall, during two of the summers I spent in Kabul, thunder storms, with heavy downfalls of rain, were frequent. In these storms the flashes of lightning were almost continuous and the peals of thunder were deafening, and without cessation; but the electricity was expended on the heights close to the city, and there are very few cases on record of a house being struck.

In the winter heavy falls of snow are common, and when the wind drifts it, the smaller houses are

sometimes covered. After a fall of snow, hazara and other labourers are called in with their wooden shovels to clear it off the roofs, as it would otherwise melt when the sun came out, and, percolating the mud covering, make the rooms below uninhabitable, and the added weight of snow is often the cause of a roof falling in. The snow is shovelled off the roofs into the streets below, where it piles up and takes months to melt, and keeps the roadway near by in a muddy condition; but the Afghan cares nothing for a little extra mud or dirt, and no one takes the trouble to clear away snow which will melt away itself in time—that would indeed be wasted labour. Latterly, arrangements have been made for carting it away from the principal thoroughfares, and in time the people may see the advantage of clearing all thoroughfares alike.

When the summer is dry, dust storms are of almost daily occurrence, and are very unpleasant when one is out walking or riding, and in the house it is also unpleasant, for all doors and windows have to be kept shut, and the rooms become very hot, and everything one touches has a gritty feel. In hot weather the air is usually still until about three in the afternoon, and then a wind rises, blowing from the north, and, coming in gusts and eddies downwards, lifts up columns of dust so effectively that in a short time it is difficult to see, and this wind continues to increase in violence until about an hour after sun-down, when it gradually dies away, and then, in the

stillness that follows, the noises of the night sound very loud.

The winter of 1901–02 was an exceptional one, for no snow fell the whole of the winter. I was told of a similar winter about twelve years before, which had been followed by cholera, and in this case history repeated itself, for in the spring the rivers and streams from the mountains dried up, the crops failed for want of water, and famine set in, and in the summer following, when food was scarcest, cholera broke out and raged for three months, and owing to the impoverished bodies of the people, the mortality was exceptionally high.

During the winter the days are mostly bright, and the sun shines brilliantly on the snow, causing it to thaw. In the evenings it freezes again, and then the roads are like polished glass, and men, horses, and camels fall and are injured, the animals often breaking their legs and having to be destroyed. The sun, shining on the snow, also causes a good deal of snow blindness. But the most trying time in winter is when the skies are overcast, and a great wind rises which nothing will shut out of the house. Then at sundown the temperature falls below zero, and continues to fall as the night advances, and even with a huge fire burning in the room, one is warm only on the side nearest the fire, the other side of the body being chilled with the continuous draught which comes in at every crevice as the wind surges against the house in seeming heavy waves. Those

outside who have to bear the brunt of this wind, suffer considerably, and often lose feet, hands, or nose with frost-bite, and soldiers on guard frequently die of cold, for they are very insufficiently clad to stand such weather. At this time, too, wolves come down at night from the mountains, driven by hunger from their natural fastnesses to seek food near the city, and attack and kill men whom they find helpless with cold and fatigue, and carry off children, sheep, and goats when they can get them.

One peculiarity about the climate is the quantity of electricity in all things. If one walks across a room in the dark, dragging the feet along the carpet, sparks of electricity follow the feet; also, if one strokes a dog smartly down the back, the same thing is noticeable. When undressing, the shirt, as it is pulled over the head, causes a crackle of electricity as it drags over the hair, and women, when brushing their long tresses, find each hair electrified and standing out straight from one another as the brush leaves it.

The clear, rare air makes distances very deceptive to the eye, and mountains at a considerable distance appear quite close. Once, when riding one of the longest day's journeys I have done in the country, I was told in the morning that we should camp under a conically-shaped mountain in the distance, which could be seen rising between the dip of two ranges of mountains, and, looking at it, I put the distance down at twenty to twenty-five miles, and

looked forward to early lunch that day; but evening was well advanced before we reached our camping-ground, and we travelled at a steady pace the whole of the day.

The clear atmosphere also makes the moonlight very brilliant, and the effect of the sleeping city bathed in the white light of the moon as seen from the roof of the house at night, the harsh outlines of houses and mountains toned down, and the domes of palaces and tombs rising above the other buildings is very beautiful. Day dispels the illusion, for the clear atmosphere and absence of vapour makes the colouring of the landscape very dull, and the brilliant green of the trees here and there appears objectionable as out of keeping with the rest of the colour scheme.

CHAPTER V

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

Belief in the supernatural—Dress of men—Complexion—Character of people—Description of various tribes—Languages and schools—Feuds between families—How holidays are spent by the people—Singing and musical instruments—Games and amusements.

SPEAKING generally, there is much in the daily life and customs of the Afghans that reminds one of England some three hundred years ago as depicted in books and histories, such as their superstitions, their treatment of sick persons by barber surgeons and leech wives, their belief in ghosts, devils, and fairies, in fortune-tellers, in people with the evil eye, in the astrologers who cast their horoscopes, and their fervent belief generally in the supernatural. In many other particulars also they resemble the old English, but in character they differ considerably.

The dress of the country is of course the Afghan costume, which consists of tombons or loose pyjama trousers made of many yards of cotton material which hang in folds from the hips, round which they are tied with a pyjama string, a plain shirt which

is worn outside the tombons, and over the shirt an armless coat (very much like a waistcoat) which is usually worn unbuttoned; a large sheet of calico is worn loosely round the neck like a shawl with one end carelessly thrown over the shoulder. The turban is the conical fez, with lungi wrapped tightly round it over the head, and the shoes more resemble slippers in shape, they are very heavy and studded with nails while the toes curl up over the foot. Stockings or socks are only worn by the well-to-do people.

Officials and those attached to the court, together with officers of the army, wear the English style of clothes, those attached to the court having long frock-coats similar to the Turkish, and wear fez of black cloth which are straight, instead of sloping up to the crown like the ordinary Turkish fez. Officers of the army wear uniforms fashioned after the style of the English army with flat peaked caps of the German pattern.

The soldiers are dressed variously, some wearing the Afghan tombons and others English trousers, or white cotton pants cut in the same style, but all have English pattern tunics or coats, and a leather belt carrying pouches strapped round the body. For head-dress, some wear the usual turban and some flat peaked caps. Soldiers may, in fact, dress as they like or can, except on review days, when their uniform (they have but one) must be worn. The soldiers of the Amir's bodyguard have uniforms

for everyday wear, and all are dressed and armed in the same style.

Most of the people who possess a horse wear long Russian boots with high heels, which give a perched up appearance to the legs; but whatever style of dress may be worn there is always a leather belt strapped round the body, in which knives and revolvers are carried, provided the man is fortunate enough to possess a revolver. Merchants who travel up and down between Kabul and India buy up stocks of old uniforms; these are much prized by the poorer Kabulis, for they wear well and are cheap, so that one sees all sorts of British regimental tunics, besides those of the police and railways, and it looks strange to see a man walking along the street with the letters "S. E. Ry," or those of another railway company on his collar, so many miles away from the place where it was first worn. Generally the Kabuli wears clothes made after the English fashion, and those who cannot afford a good sort of material for their dress do the best they can, and are to be seen with the tombons and shoes of the Afghan, and an English coat, or a suit cut in the English style, and Afghan shoes, and no socks or stockings. When I speak of the English coat or trousers, I do not mean that the clothes are English made, for the bazar tailors are clever enough to imitate the English style sufficiently well to satisfy their patrons, and the tailor who can cut clothes to fit well is in great demand, and soon becomes a well-to-do person.

In complexion the people vary considerably, some being very dark skinned, and others as fair as Europeans. Those with dark skins are, as a rule, Kabulis who have no objection to marrying the women of southern nations, but the true Afghans from the hills are very fair, and often with light-coloured hair, and as they despise women of other nations they seldom marry any but those of their own people. In many of the Afghans red cheeks give a greater impression of fairness. Usually the hair is black, and hangs straight and lank, and men whose hair and beard go grey from old age or other reasons, but who feel young enough to take other wives to themselves—for they marry as many as they can support—dye their hair and beard a deep black, but as the dye is not permanent it has to be frequently renewed; otherwise it fades, and the hair and beard become a dirty red and look very unprepossessing. This is often seen in men whose continued duty, or journey to some distant place, prevents them seeking the services of their hairdresser, who is usually one of the women of the household. It is only very old men indeed who are seen in Kabul with grey hair and beards, for personal vanity is one of the leading characteristics of the Afghan, and this influences him to spend more than he ought on dress in order to appear well, the food for himself and family being of diminished quantity in consequence, very often, indeed, near to starvation point. I have known well-dressed men who lived chiefly on dry bread, and not

too much of that, in order to save the bulk of their income for new clothes.

It has been said that the Afghans are the Lost Tribes of Israel, and there is much in the appearance of the true Afghan to support this theory, and in character and name also. The hooked nose, deep-sunk piercing eyes, and general features are distinctly Jewish, while those who have had business relations with the Afghans will vouch for the character, and then the names, Suleiman, Yakoob, Yusef, Daood (Solomon, Jacob, Joseph, David), etc., are common names. Some mountains in the country also have Jewish names, such as the Koh-i-Suleiman, so that one is inclined to think that if they are not the Lost Tribes, they must be of Jewish origin.

The Kabulis are hybrid creatures, compounded of many races, and generally having the worst characteristics of each. In complexion they vary considerably, but, as a whole, are fair as compared with the Hindustanis, and some have grey and blue eyes and light hair. Among them are those of villainous countenance, and others just as handsome, both in face and form. They are generally short of stature, as compared with the Afghans, who are tall and well-built men; but the conditions of life among the hillmen are such that the weakly die young, and it is a case of the survival of the fittest, which, so far as the physical effect on the race is concerned, is worthy of emulation by other races.

The Kandaharis are also a good type of Afghan,

and are mostly strong well-built men. Grey and blue eyes are common amongst them, as with the Kabulis; but whether this is natural to them or the result of the English occupation of the country on two occasions many years ago, is problematical.

The people of Turkestan and the Usbegs are rather Mongolian in feature, the type being in some more pronounced than others. The Hazaras, whom Amir Abdur Rahman brought into subjection, are decidedly Mongolian in feature, and are mostly short, squat, strongly built people.

Another race the late Amir subjugated, the Kafris, are entirely distinct from the other races of the country. They are generally very fair complexioned, and have light-coloured eyes. They are not tall, and are slimly yet symmetrically built. In many cases their features are Grecian in type, and it is quite conceivable that they are, as has been suggested, the descendants of the garrisons Alexander the Great left in the country on his historic march to India. They were idolators until the Amir took them in hand and converted them by fire and sword, and they have little love for their new masters. They are quick and intelligent, and make good workmen.

The language of the country is Pushtoo, which is general among the people from Peshawar to Kandahar. The Turkestanis use the Turki language, and the Kafris have a language of their own, which latter might form an interesting study for those who are acquainted with the old Greek language. All people

of any consequence speak Persian, which is the court language, and the language used in Kabul itself, for very few of the Kabulis are able to speak Pushtoo, and with a knowledge of Persian one can get on anywhere in the country, but it is less common among the frontier tribes than elsewhere.

Persian is the language taught in the schools, which the children attend from early morning until about ten o'clock, and again in the late afternoon for a couple of hours. In these schools the master, usually a moullah, sits on a carpet in the centre of the room with the children in a circle round him, sitting cross-legged, with their books on their knees, and reading aloud in a sing-song manner, while rocking their bodies backwards and forwards. This rocking the body to and fro while reading becomes such a habit that in after life very few men can read anything without doing it, and their voices take on the sing-song intonation of the school. For the chastisement of the unruly and stupid, the master has a pliable rod by him. There is no sparing the rod and spoiling the child, and when the master wishes to punish one of them, the small offender is held on his back, with his legs up in the air, and receives so many cuts on the soles of his feet, and while the punishment lasts he howls piteously. Sometimes in passing by a school I have stopped, thinking a child was surely being murdered, until I saw the reason why the boy was howling, and my standing to watch generally had the effect of stopping the child's noise,

for the "Feringhee" is one of the names used to frighten children with. One end of the room in which school is held has no wall, and is open on the side facing the road, so there is nothing to prevent one watching the school children at work.

Children are also taught in the school to read the old Arabic, in order that they may read the Koran, but while there are many men who can read Arabic, there are few who understand it, and fewer still, if any, who can speak it as a language. Many can recite passages from the Koran as a parrot would do, and some, who are thereby called Hafiz, can recite it from memory from beginning to end.

In character the people are idle, luxurious, and sensual, which characteristics become prominent as soon as a man possesses power or money (almost synonymous terms in Afganistan). They are capricious and ungrateful, and turn easily in their likes and dislikes, and are readily led to turn against those to whom they owe gratitude. Usually, when they want anything, they want it at once, and should their desire be delayed for any time, they no longer want it. They are lying, treacherous, and vengeful, and one who has a grudge or enmity against another will not show it openly, but conceals his feelings and feigns friendship, while waiting the opportunity for vengeance, and in the execution of their vengeance they are capable of unheard-of cruelties. They are readily ruled by fear, but are apt to brood over small grievances until they convince themselves that they

are most cruelly treated, and then their feelings may result in a fit of Berserk rage, under the influence of which they lose control of themselves and take vengeance violently, often stabbing and hacking at their victim long after life is extinct. They are cruel and insensible to the pain of others, often laughing at it, and, except in the case of a relative, will seldom go out of their way to relieve suffering.

Towards their children they are too kind, and spoil them while they are young, denying them nothing which it is possible to give them, and dressing them in gaudy clothes while they themselves go ragged. They make no attempt to correct them for any wrong-doing, laughing at it rather as a sign of precociousness, and among the Kabulis it is a common thing for a little child to be able to curse fluently, and their curses are often directed at their parents. This neglect in training the young properly accounts for much that is objectionable in the character of the people. It is not until children are seven or eight years old that they begin to correct them, but a good deal of the character of a child is at that age already formed.

The Afghans are for ever scheming one against another, family against family, official against official, farmer against farmer, workman against workman, and wife against wife—the latter being, naturally, one of the evils which arise from the custom of plurality of wives. The result of all this scheming is often a quarrel which ends in a fight, in which one or other

of the parties may be killed ; they do not always use knife or bullet for the purpose, they have other ways too of ridding themselves of an enemy.

In the cities, when a man commits murder, he is taken charge of and judged by the authorities, but in the country it often results in a feud between the two families, which is carried on for generations, the murderer being waited for by the relatives of the man whom he killed, and killed in turn ; the slayer in this case also being eventually slain by a member of the opposite party, and so the feud goes on for many years.

Illustrating the vengeful character of the people, I may mention the case of a man who killed another and escaped to his own house or fort, as it is called by them, each house being in the nature of a stronghold. Here he stayed for some thirty years, without venturing to put his foot outside the house ; but at the end of that time, supposing the watchfulness of his enemies had slackened, he went out one day, and was carried back dead. The vengeance of the relatives of the man he had killed had not slumbered, neither had their watchfulness. It is said that revenge is sweet, but it seems to have an added sweetness to these people.

There is a law among the people that a man who has been apprehended by the authorities for murder, may be claimed by the murdered man's relatives to execute or forgive as they wish. The relatives may then accept so much blood-money as compensation, or

may kill the man in any way they like. Sometimes the haggling among the relatives about accepting the blood-money offered by the murderer and his friends, some being in favour of accepting the money, and others in favour of death, is continued even under the scaffold, where the condemned one stands ready pinioned, and with the rope round his neck, and after, perhaps, an hour or so of wrangling, it ends in the decision that the man must suffer death, and then the rope is seized and the man hauled up. The feelings of the man during the altercation in such cases must be unenviable.

Another case which further shows the vengeful character of the people is that of a man who murdered a boy, and was handed over to the relatives for execution or forgiveness. The mother of the boy resisted those in favour of blood-money, and insisted on the man's throat being cut, as he cut her son's, and when this was done, she, in the frenzy of her vengeance, actually drank the blood as it flowed from the man's throat.

The amusements of the people are simple, and would lead one to suppose them rather simple-minded, if one did not know them. For instance, in the early evening, when work is over, the people will flock in summer-time to the public garden, where plots are laid out with flowers, each plot having one kind of flower only, carrying with them their singing-birds in cages, and will sit round these plots until night-fall, contentedly enjoying the scent of the flowers

and the cool evening breeze. They sit there quietly, and for the most part silently, and there is no noise beyond the pit-pat of the slippers of those going and coming on the garden paths. At one or two corners of the garden walks are tea-sellers, with a little crowd of people squatting round drinking tea out of the small handleless cups commonly used, and taking a pull at the chillum (pipe similar to a hookah) now and then.

On Fridays (the Sundays of the Mussulmans), and on holidays, many people go off walking or on horse or donkey, when, in many cases, they ride two together on one animal, and sometimes three, to the gardens in the country, taking food and cooking-pots with them; and there they will wander round the gardens until midday, content to be amongst the trees and flowers. Then they cook their food, and after eating that, they lie about and chat, or doze the afternoon away, and when evening begins to gather, they get their belongings together, and start off home again, having had a glorious day's outing, according to their own statement. They are easy to please in this way, and anything which brings them fresh air, sunlight, flowers, and grass or trees, and no worry or duty, and, if possible, a little to eat and drink while enjoying it all, is a day's tamasha to be talked over and retailed to others, and dreamt about until the next opportunity comes.

When other means of amusement fail, they sit together on the roof of the house, or in some quiet

spot near by, where there may be a tree to shade them, and one of them plays the rubarb, which is something like a mandoline, and sings Persian love-songs. Out of half a dozen men there is usually one who can play and sing, and their songs sound best at a little distance, for if close by the nasal intonation is not prepossessing, while the contortions of the mouth and face in bringing out the tremulous and prolonged high notes rather fascinate one, and the song is forgotten in watching them and waiting for the breakdown, which seems momentarily imminent. There are others of their stringed instruments which resemble the banjo in shape, but all are called "rubarb." The music has little change about it, and differs from ours in not being composed of different airs, but in being of bars of four to six beats, which are repeated over and over again. It sounds very monotonous, and is a little trying, until one gets used to it, and then, on a still summer evening, the rubarb in the distance has rather a soothing sound in its monotony, if one happens to be reclining in an easy-chair, smoking and resting after dinner. But if one is busy writing, or is absorbed in calculations, or anything of that sort, the monotony of the sound is very trying, and produces a desire to make a change at any cost, even if a shot-gun is necessary to effect it.

The people are like the rest of the Orientals, and do not look upon exercise in any form as an amusement, and therefore, are not in the habit of dancing

as a means of recreation and pleasure, but they have, instead, properly trained dancing-girls to do so before them. The services of the dancing-girls are requisitioned only on festivals and weddings, or when some wealthy man gives an entertainment to his friends on the occasion of a visit from one of the princes or some high official person.

The dancing-girls are accompanied by men with musical instruments who form the orchestra, and among the instruments is the inevitable tom-tom or drum, which is played by being struck with the fingers or the hand, and not with drumsticks. The life of the dancing-girl is a hard one, for the dancing they practice is exhausting, and induces a good deal of perspiration, and the girl is clad in light flimsy muslin, while the nights even in summer are chill, and all doors and windows are open to the breeze. Consequently, she catches cold and gets fever and continues to get it, for she must practice her profession whenever called upon, so that it is not a matter for surprise that these girls mostly die of consumption. The dancing-girls in Kabul are Hindustanis, from the Peshawar and Dehli districts, while some are the offspring of former dancing-girls and the men of the country. Although much has been said about the Oriental dancing-girls' poetry of motion, and I have seen many others in different parts of India, their action during the dance appears very studied and wanting in grace, even with the best of them, and none that I have seen are to be

compared with our own principal ballet-dancers for grace of movement.

Among wild Afghan tribes, such as the Jidrani and others, knife-dances are indulged in. About fifty men arrange themselves in a circle with four or five more in the centre, who beat tom-toms and tambourines, and play on stringed instruments. The dance commences by the men springing forward towards the centre of the circle and back again, flashing their knives about over their heads, and singing in time to the music in a low tone, but gradually the music, singing, and dancing become louder and quicker, belts and turbans are thrown off to allow of greater freedom of movement, and the knives flash more rapidly, until at last the men seem in a very frenzy, and the dancing becomes a series of wild leaps in the air, knives are thrown up and caught again, and the singing changes to a chorus of wild yells. When the dance has reached its most frenzied point, it suddenly ceases, and then there is a loud clapping of hands by the dancers, and all is over.

They have another wild dance which resembles some strange rite of worshippers round a fetish. Two or three men with tom-toms sit together, and the dancers arrange themselves in a large circle round them, but instead of facing towards the centre of the circle as in the former dance, each man faces the one in front of him. When the tom-toms begin, they spring forward a step and stop momentarily, then

spring forward again on the other foot, and so continue, but during each spring they turn violently half round to right or left as each foot advances, and the sudden twist they give their bodies sends their turbans or caps flying after the first few steps. In a little while, when they begin to warm up to the dance, they do a whole turn in the air during each spring forward, and, as this is continued, the dancers become more and more energetic, until their hair, which is worn long and cut straight round the shoulders, stands out like a mop being wrung out as they spin round. Their arms, being also extended at the same time, the whole effect, as they spin round more rapidly and violently and the tom-toms beat quicker, is exceedingly quaint.

Some of the people, mostly soldiers, go in for swordstick combats. The swordsticks are similar to the English ones, with basket guards, but the combatants carry small round leather shields in addition, which are held in the left hand, and not partly on the forearm, as is usual with larger shields. Some of the men are very expert in this exercise, but they do very little guarding by means of the swordstick, and catch most of the blows on the shield, for this allows of a quicker return stroke. They are also much in favour of leaping back to avoid a leg-cut, leaning forward as they do so to get in a down-stroke at their adversary's head.

In the late spring of each year, the "Jubah" takes place. The jubah is a fair combined with

sports, and is held on a level strip of plain under the Asman heights south-west of the city. Here they have horse races, but the races are arranged on the spur of the moment between one man and another, and are not agreed on beforehand to determine the best of several horses over a fixed course. Food and toy-stalls are erected along the slopes of the hill, and all Kabul and its children turn out for the three days the fair is held. On these occasions the people put on their best clothes, and the children are particularly gaudy in their coloured velvet coats and caps. The children's toys are very quaint in appearance. The dolls are made of stuffed rag, and are dressed in Afghan fashion, and represent both men and women, not children, while others represent demons. Then there are small windmills fixed on the end of a stick, and wooden whistles, and many other curiously shaped articles, all gorgeously coloured, which children love. There is also a Turkestani tight-rope walker dressed in a gaily coloured fantastic costume, who fits up two long poles with a rope between, both poles and rope being very solidly made and very firmly fixed, and gives displays thereon.

The jubah is also made the occasion for deciding the wrestling contests between the chief "pulwans" (athletes) of the city. These wrestling matches are usually conducted before the Amir and the princes, for whom tents are erected on the hillside, and the Amir awards money prizes to the victors. The keenest interest is taken in the wrestling by all

people, and among the competitors defeat is in some cases so taken to heart that the man will never wrestle again, and others have been known to become so depressed through being beaten as to commit suicide.

There is no course kept open for those who are racing their horses, and the riders have to dodge in and out amongst the people and other horses and donkeys as best they can, and often man and horse come to grief, chiefly over a donkey which gets out of the way of no one, unless under compulsion. On one occasion two men were racing their horses from opposite ends of the plain, and met midway, and as neither would give way to the other in passing they collided, and the result was that one man and horse were killed on the spot, and the other two died the following day.

Story-tellers are in great favour among the people, and a good *raconteur* may be sure of an attentive audience. The bazar story-teller takes up his stand in a busy thoroughfare, and begins telling his story. In a short time he is surrounded by a large crowd, eagerly drinking in the various episodes related, while people riding or walking past have difficulty in squeezing their way through the crowd, if they themselves do not stop to swell it; but nothing is said or done by the passers-by to disturb the story-teller in his recital of the adventures of the prince or princess among the various jinn, fairies, or "deoo" (demons) of old time. Story-tellers are also attached to the retinues of the Amir and the princes, and others of

high standing. All their attendants and officials are story-tellers in a way; but those mentioned are special men, whose chief duty it is to tell stories to their masters while the latter lie on their beds at night and listen until they fall asleep.

In Kabul, when a guest is invited to dinner, the invitation means that he is expected to stop the night in the house of his host, and on these occasions, when the dinner has been despatched, the guests gather round the host, squatting or lying on carpets while they smoke the chillum, and each one takes his turn at telling a story. The interest in the stories related is so great that they often sit listening to one another far into the night, and are unfit for work the following day.

Boys and children amuse themselves in much the same way as English children. The chief game among boys is "toop bazee," which is played with a flat piece of wood and a ball, and is very much like rounders. They also go in for wrestling, and fencing with sticks, and throwing arrows with a piece of string, at which they are rather expert. Some of the elder boys shoot sparrows and small birds with clay pellets from a long blow-pipe, and in order to get the birds at close range the boy takes his stand beneath a tree and uses a call which imitates a number of sparrows chirruping and fighting together, and this induces the sparrows to come and investigate the cause of trouble, when they offer a good target from below.

Smaller children play with balls, knuckle bones, marbles, and walnuts. The walnuts are used as in a game of marbles, and any knocked out of the ring, in which each player places a certain number, are the property of the player who knocks them out.

Only very little girls are to be seen in the streets, as at about eight years of age they become "purdah," *i.e.* no longer to be seen by men other than their relatives, and are confined to the women's quarters of the house, and cannot go outside unless wearing the "bukra," or cotton overdress, which covers them from head to foot, and has a slit covered with fine lace in front of the eyes for them to see through. Little girls may be seen sometimes on the house-top playing at a game similar to ring-of-roses, or playing with their dolls, and keeping house, or keeping shop, and other games of make-believe, which their sex delight in. Their greatest delight is to have an English doll with English clothes, for their own dolls are made of rag and dressed like themselves.

CHAPTER VI

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS—*continued*

Superstitions, fairies, and devils—A curious legend—Astrologers—Children singing prayers on roofs to avert calamity—Different foods in use—Smoking and tobacco—The Amir's chief physician—Snuff—Method of keeping warm in winter—How time is kept—Weddings of different classes—Funerals.

THE people are very superstitious, and firmly believe in ghosts, spirits, fairies, and devils, and most of their stories are about these good and evil spirits, as they term them, while their belief in them is such that even men are chary of going about alone at night. If a man is met at night walking alone one generally first hears him and then sees him, for he makes a good deal of noise as he walks, and also whistles or sings as he goes along.

When I was stopping at the Mihman khana, I came in late one night, having been for several hours with the Amir, and while walking up to the house from the gate, I noticed one of the syces (grooms) coming from the house towards me, and making a prodigious noise, whistling. He stopped whistling when he saw me, and I wondered why he was so noisy, such being unusual, but when I got to my rooms I found the reason to be a nervous shock he had had. It appeared that one of my Hindustani

servants, while in a facetious mood, had blacked his face, or rather made it more black with burnt cork, and whitened his lips and made white circles round his eyes. Then, taking two sheepskin coats, he had reversed them so that the hair was outside, and putting his legs through the sleeves of one and his arms through the sleeves of the other, had fastened both round his waist, and then put on a sheepskin cap with long hair. He dressed up afterwards to show me, and his appearance was not prepossessing. A guard of seven men was stationed in the vestibule outside the door of my rooms, and to these he came on hands and knees until quite close, and then he started bounding towards them with huge roars. Thinking that a real deoo (demon) was on them, every man flung away rifle and sheepskin coat, which is a heavy one, and fled wildly to the guardroom at the outer gate; but one man, who was asleep when the rest fled, woke up with the noise and rose to a sitting position, staring round-eyed at the apparition and booing, until he regained enough consciousness to get up and fly. The demon then went to the small room adjoining the verandah, where the chaeedar's quarters were (the man who makes the tea). The chaeedar was sitting alone in deep thought, on a small carpet with his back to the window, which was open, but when this apparition came through the door, he rose up and sprang backwards through the window, regardless of possible injury to himself or anything else, save that he

left the room immediately. The next people visited were those of the Amir's servants, who were appointed to look after my comforts, and were always in my sitting-room when on duty, and his appearance at one door was the signal for their wild flight through the other, chairs and tables being upset in the hurry to get out. He then visited the other servants in their quarters with great success, and it was soon after it was over, and all had gathered together again to relate their impressions and experience, that I came in and the tale was told to me. All those who had been frightened looked very sheepish, and each man was trying to prove that he ran because the other one did. However, the infection of fear spread even to the apparition, and for several nights after no one would go out, not even across the garden to their own quarters, unless some one was with them.

Fairies are generally supposed to inhabit the lonely mountains around, and although they are believed to be, on the whole, a good sort, the people are more inclined to give them a wide berth than risk too much by loitering about those places the fairies are supposed to haunt. They are described as twelve to eighteen inches high, very fantastically dressed, and going about in a follow-my-leader manner, dancing and skipping as they go. They are believed to be afraid of men, and to hide themselves from them, and so are only seen by those who are in hiding or sleeping in out-of-the-way places. Of children they are said

GROUP OF AFGHAN GUARDS AND SERVANTS—TAKEN IN COMPOUND OF MY HOUSE—KITCHEN AT THE BACK.

[*To face p.* 80.

to have no fear, but it is unwise to let a child stray near their haunts, as it may be put under a spell, or perhaps changed for one of their own children, who is made to take the face and form of the stolen child, and then the changeling will bring all sorts of bad luck upon its foster-parents.

The supernatural being the people dread most, and to whom they put down much that happens which cannot be satisfactorily explained, is the shaitan. Shaitans are demons who take many forms according to the fear or gift of exaggeration of the individual who thinks he has seen one. These beings they imagine may be behind any bush or boulder after sundown, and they also believe them capable of coming into the sleeping-room at night to frighten them into fits by their very ugliness, if nothing worse befalls, so the people sleep with head as well as body covered with blanket or rezai. They never sleep alone in a room, but several together, and many have been astonished when I told them that in my country each person has a separate room, if possible, and that children are put to sleep alone at night. They say it is not that they really fear a shaitan, for God is good, but they are not accustomed to sleeping alone, and, besides, it is unwise to be alone at night should a spirit happen to come in.

One of my servants solemnly assured me one morning that the night before his charpoy (bedstead) was lifted from the floor and swung round the room with him on it until he felt giddy, and at the same

time he heard the most strange noises. He, however, admitted, on being questioned, that he kept his eyes firmly shut and saw nothing, and no doubt his head was wrapped close in the bedclothes. However, he wanted another room to sleep in, and refused to occupy that room again, and whether the other servants played him a trick or whether it was a bad attack of indigestion that troubled him I could not discover, but the room he slept in was afterwards used as a store-room by the other servants, and the name it acquired was sufficient to deter the servants who came after him from sleeping in it.

Another time the ceiling-cloth of one of my office-rooms came down during the night. It is a common occurrence, because the earth that falls through between the rafters from the mud roofs brings a gradually increasing weight to bear on the ceiling-cloth, and it sags until the cloth, sooner or later, rips at the edges and comes down. When I went to see the damage done the men with me said that it was assuredly the work of a shaitan, for who else could do it with the windows bolted and the door locked? To argue against logic like this was useless.

Another story told me by an Afghan about shaitans was that one evening after visiting some friends, he had some distance to walk before getting home, and the road lay through a burial-ground (burial-grounds have no walls round them as in England). It was late when he got among the graves, and the thought of walking alone there made

his flesh creep, but he kept on until he was nearly through, and then he saw little flames rise from the ground in front of him and flicker about. This terrified him, and he put on an extra spurt to get clear of the graves, when the figure of a man appeared in front. The sight of another man calmed him until, on coming closer to the figure, he saw that a shawl was wrapped round the head (shawls are commonly worn so at night when the air is chill), and the eyes in the face shone like two stars, while the nearer he got to the figure the taller it grew, until it loomed high above him, and then he turned and ran back. But the house he had left was much further away from where he then was than his own home, so after running for a time he determined to face the graveyard again. But the same thing happened, only now, being in a frenzy to get out of it all, he made a dash to get past the figure, and, while doing so, he lost consciousness, and did not recover it until the early morning, when he found himself lying on the road, but just clear of the graves, and to that he attributed his salvation.

Another Afghan told me that he was sleeping one night in the serai at Gundamak, when he awoke without knowing the reason of his waking, and sat up. Then one wall of the room he was in disappeared, and there on the ground beyond he saw a regiment of Gorawallahs (English soldiers) march past, but without making any noise, and their faces were white in the moonlight, and wore an awful look.

This man, too, lost consciousness until the morning, or rather, he said he did.

The people have a curious legend about sponges. They say the English people take very large earthen jars, and set them on the highest peaks of the mountains, and conceal the pots by piling stones round them, so that only the mouth shows. They then hide themselves in the crevices of the rocks, and wait until the clouds settle on the mountain-top, and come slowly down to the jars. Then, when a small cloud is seen to enter the jar, one of the men comes cautiously from his hiding-place, and quickly puts the lid on, and fastens it there. The jar is allowed to remain closed for about three days, by which time the cloud is dead, after which the vessel is broken and the dead cloud is cut into pieces, and taken out and sold as sponge. The Persian name for "sponge" is the same as for "cloud," and perhaps this accounts for the legend.

Astrologers do a good business among the people, and their forecasts as to the lucky days on which to commence a journey or some new work are implicitly believed. The Amir and the members of the royal family have their own astrologers, who are consulted as to the auspicious day on which to commence any matter of importance, besides being asked to read what the future contains, but their verdicts, or such of them that I have heard, are ambiguous, and capable of being read in more than one way—a very necessary art for those who read the riddle of the

future for the Amir. The astrologers have also to interpret dreams, for dreams are looked upon as signs given to warn or guide people, and it was due to a dream that the present Amir divorced all his wives but the four allowed by the Koran. It is not all people who consider themselves capable of predicting the future who are treated with honour and amass wealth, as witness the case of three men from a distant part of the country, who were brought before the Amir for predicting that a great calamity was to visit the country on a certain date, some few months ahead, and who expected much from their voicing of the prophecy. The Amir's mood, which is always an uncertain quality, at the time the men were brought before him, was not inclined towards signs of evil portent, and he gave an order that the prophets be kept in prison until the date fixed by them for the happening of the calamity, and then, he said, they shall be rewarded if their words are shown to be true, but in the other event, death. The prophecy was not fulfilled, but the Amir's sentence was.

The astrologers cast horoscopes, and tell fortunes with cards, and use other implements of the black art, for forecasting future events, and very rapidly make name and fortune, when once one of their prognostications is fulfilled, for then all their utterances are treated as truth itself, and should at any time any of their further prognostications prove contrary to actual happenings, the people do not blame the

fortune-teller, but themselves instead, for the predictions being always more or less ambiguous, the people consider it their own misconstruction of his words which prevented them knowing what was about to happen. This sort of sophistry does not pertain to the credulous among Afghans alone.

The superstitious and religious beliefs mingle, as they do in other countries, and should any one praise a child for any attribute of mind or body at once, " nam i Khuda " (God's name) must be said to avert the evil which open praise will beget. The evil eye is also supposed to be possessed by some persons, and God's name must be spoken to avert its calamitous effect. Curiously enough, those credited with the evil eye are not blamed for its possession, but are said to be unlucky. In like manner, those who are skilful in curing and healing the sick and maimed, are said to have a lucky hand.

They have one custom which will commend itself to many, and that is, to collect the children on the roofs of the different houses, and there sing prayers in unison, for the averting of cholera, earthquakes, or other calamity, because the children, being more innocent than their elders, their prayers are supposed to be more readily listened to. The roofs of the houses are all close together, and it is pleasant to see the groups of children standing in lines on the different roofs, and listen to them singing the prayers with their clear young voices, and when the calamity to be averted is cholera, one rather hopes their prayers

may be listened to, for cholera makes a several months' stay when it visits Kabul, and is a trying time for all concerned.

The food of the majority of the people in Kabul is of a simple description, consisting, as it does, of dry bread, which is made into cakes, oval in shape, and about twelve inches long, by half an inch thick. Those who can afford it, take curds and cheese with the bread, and sometimes meat and vegetables made into a stew. The Chinese green tea is almost always taken with food and it is a very poor man who will not expend three pice (a halfpenny) on a pot of tea, even if cheese must be omitted from the bill of fare to afford it. In the summer-time fruit is plentiful and cheap; vegetables too, and lettuce is grown in large quantities. Two pice (little more than a farthing) will procure enough fruit to make a good meal for a man, and in the season most of the people met with on the streets are to be seen eating fruit, lettuce, or rhubarb, which latter grows wild in the mountains.

Very poor people live mostly on mulberries, which they also dry for winter consumption. Many of the Hazaras, who are a saving people, live on nothing else during the summer months, and cases of broken limbs through falling from the trees while gathering mulberries, are common. A diet of mulberries induces fever, particularly in those persons not accustomed to them, and the fever is of a serious nature, and many die of it.

The Koochee people, a sort of gipsy race who have no fixed home, but constantly travel about the country with their cattle and camels, and do a trade carrying goods and merchandise from place to place, and who are a most hardy race, live on corn bread, sheep and goat milk, cheese, and grass, eating the latter uncooked. Spinach, which grows wild, is also largely eaten by them, as well as by the other people of the country.

The food of the Afghans of the villages is principally soup and bread with curds, sour milk, butter-milk, and fruit. Butter-milk is a particular favourite with them, and an Afghan can drink a very fair quantity of it at a sitting.

If a camel, cow, or other esculent animal is sick, and it is certain that it is dying, the throat is cut, and the customary prayer said to make it halal (lawful eating), and the meat is then sold or eaten by the owners. I once saw a dying camel, that looked all skin and bone, being goaded along the bank of the river to the city that he might be killed close to the market for the better disposal of the meat, and it seemed as though the poor animal might topple over and die at any moment and cheat his master. There is little compassion in the bowels of an Afghan.

The better classes and well-to-do people eat of many savoury dishes, of which the principal are pilau and kabob; the latter being meat well peppered and salted, and roasted on a skewer over a fire (a roast leg of mutton is also a kabob). The pilau are of different

MARRIAGE PARTY OF THE "UPPER TEN." BRIDE AND WAITING-WOMEN CARRIED IN LITTERS.

(From a drawing by the Author.) [*To face p.* 88.

sorts, and are composed of rice, spices, and meat; the rice and meat being stewed separately and mixed together on a dish. Preserves, pickles, sweetmeats, fruit, bread, are also eaten, and the ever present tea is taken to wind the meal up with, and with the tea the chillum is handed round, that tobacco may put the crowning touch on all. Large quantities of tea are consumed daily by the Kabulis, who drink it as often as they can afford it.

Women smoke the chillum as well as men. It is shaped like the hookah, but has a straight stem instead of a flexible one. The tobacco is of country growth, and is very rank smelling, more resembling a burning oil rag than anything else.

The Afghans call any large, fat man a strong one, and as fatness is considered a sign of both health and prosperity, all people who can afford to do so, eat until gorged, and in consequence many of them, both men and women, are grossly fat. The late Amir's chief physician was so fat he could not walk, and had to be carried. Another man was so fat that he could do nothing for himself, and had to be washed and dressed by his slave girls, much as a baby is. Of this man I was told that he once noticed a very objectionable smell about his body, and in spite of all that was done to better it, the smell at last got so bad that he told the slave girls to carry him to the hamam and bath him, and while washing him, as ordered, the girls discovered the cause of the nuisance to be a dead frog hidden in one of the folds of fat.

It had no doubt got in when the man was having his last tub, and been crushed to death.

Snuff-taking is also commonly indulged in by the better-class people. The poorer people, however, use the native tobacco, roughly crushed, and put it in their mouths, and there are some who can afford the snuff brought up from India who do the same in preference to sniffing it up the nose.

It is only in the large houses that there are fire-places, but there are few people who are wealthy enough to afford the cost of the large quantity of wood required during the winter months in order to keep the rooms warm enough to sit in, for the doors and windows of all houses are so badly fitted that the draughts of wind make the rooms unbearably cold even with a large fire going, and one has to sit in furs to be comfortable. So, to reduce the cost of fuel to a minimum and yet keep themselves warm day and night, the people have the "sandalee." This is formed of a square wooden stool placed in the centre of the room and under the stool a small perforated iron box standing on legs, in which charcoal is burnt, and over all is spread a large rezai or quilt which covers the stool and fire-box, and extends on all sides over most of the floor of the room. The stool is used in order to keep the rezai away from the fire-box. Charcoal is lighted in the iron box, and when it is burning brightly the box is placed under the centre stool, whence the heat from the fire spreads under the whole of the rezai

and keeps it very warm, and under such a cover the charcoal burns very slowly and the fire lasts for hours. Thin mattresses and pillows placed under the outer portion of the rezai are used to sleep on, or sit on in the daytime. Under this the whole of the family, father, mother, sons and their wives, daughters, children, aunts, and other relations, sleep at night, all being kept warm on the coldest night at the cost of a few pice for charcoal. The drawback is that at times with a newly lighted fire, the charcoal fumes are excessive, and produce nausea and headache, and sometimes suffocation, and also when a person is in the habit of using it during the day while having occasionally to go out into the frosty air, he often gets rheumatism, or other complaint. Another drawback is the moral effect on a whole family of men and women sleeping together in a small space under the rezai, and many call the sandalee "the devil's playground." In the guardrooms the soldiers use these sandalees too, the men sitting with their legs tucked under the rezai, while they have sheepskin coats covering the head and body, and in this way they can defy the bitterest wind. It is the one standing outside on guard who gets frozen to death at times.

In Kabul and the principal cities time is kept by means of a sundial, but though there are tables printed in Persian of the daily difference between solar and mean time, the time given by them is only approximate, for the dials have been constructed

for other latitudes, and they are fixed in the direction of the magnetic north instead of the true one. One day, after ascertaining the true time, I informed the Amir that the midday gun was twenty minutes fast; but he said it was better so, for then they would not be late for midday prayers. Daily at midday a gun is fired to announce the time to the people, and those who have clocks and watches set them accordingly. Comparatively few, however, of the people are able to tell the time from a clock, and many have the most hazy idea of the length of time expressed by an hour or half an hour. This ignorance extends also to numbers, the people generally being able to count up to twenty, and any number above that is expressed as so many "taman" (score) together with the odd figure to make up the number. Some of the people do not even know the days of the week, and have to be told that a certain day is so many days after the present one.

Courtship and marriage in Afghanistan differ in many respects from those interesting episodes in European countries, but in no respect more than in the man not seeing the girl until they are married, and she is his wife. Men in Afghanistan are not prone to talk about their wives, or the women of their family, and to ask after a man's wife is akin to an insult, as evincing some degree of familiarity with her. Under these circumstances a man's feelings while he is waiting to see what sort of girl he

has married are not ascertainable by direct question, but one would suppose that there must be an anxiety bordering on the intense to know what manner of woman it is that must hereafter be called "wife," for the women vary in face and form as much as the men, and the "pig in the poke" may be as beautiful as a houri, or as ugly as sin, if not uglier in the opinion of some sinners.

Excepting in the case of boy and girl betrothals among people of high rank, which are arranged by the heads of the families, or when a young man's relations arrange which woman he shall marry, it is usual for a man when he desires another wife to make known his wishes to his friends and his intention soon becomes public property. He then receives overtures from men with marriageable daughters, and the discussions with one and another are no light matter, for the prospective father-in-law expects money or kind in exchange for his daughter, and the beauty and qualities of the said daughter being an unknown quantity, the man is not inclined to be either liberal or rash. However, when the proceedings have at length assumed so much headway that the man is satisfied with the standing of the family the girl belongs to, and the family's future prospects, and considers that the father of the girl has reduced his demands to the lowest fraction, he then sends his female relatives to inspect the cause of the trouble, and on their verdict, other things being satisfactory, concludes the bargain. When all the bargaining is

over the ceremony of betrothal takes place, followed sooner or later by the marriage ceremony.

The marriage ceremony depends for splendour and feasting upon the wealth and standing of the families of the contracting parties. With members of the royal family and people of high rank, it means a three days' tamasha, with the feasting of a great number of relatives and friends, and expenditure of further money in dancing-girls, bands, and other things. Although the expenditure varies according to the wealth of the persons concerned, in all cases the greatest splendour consistent with the rank of the contracting parties is aimed at, even if money must be borrowed to give a good show off, and in this they do not differ much from people nearer London. When the marriage ceremony is completed, the bride is carried in a sort of sedan chair to the bridegroom's house, and the bridegroom, together with many of his relations and friends riding on horseback, accompany her, carrying guns, which they fire as they go along, while in front of them goes a drum and fife band with men dancing and pirouetting in front of it. The shooting of guns is a relic of older times when a man with the aid of his friends had to obtain his bride by force of arms or some stratagem, and then carry her away in front of his saddle while her relatives pursued them.

The weddings of the poor people have no display such as this, and the bride and bridegroom have perforce to walk before and after the ceremony, for they

cannot afford a moullah, or priest, to come to the house, and so have to go to his place to be married. They may be seen in the street, the bridegroom walking first and the bride after him (no woman must walk in front of or even abreast a man); and after her is a girl friend or relative, carrying her clothes in a bundle on her head. In front of them walks a man with a tom-tom (native drum), and another with a tin whistle, both doing their best to enliven the proceedings by making the most noise possible with the instruments at their disposal, and so they wend their way to the bridegroom's poor house.

I was told in Kabul that there is an old Afghan marriage custom among some of the tribes which differs from the above. With them, a man who wishes to marry a girl is allowed to live for some time in her father's house, using the girl as his wife, and when after a reasonable time has elapsed, there is evidence that the girl is going to become a mother, he marries her. Should this not happen, the man is at liberty to marry her, or depart, and elsewhere seek a wife who is capable of continuing his family. The wish for a son is very strong among the Afghans, and whereas the birth of a boy is accompanied with great rejoicing, the birth of a girl passes unnoticed, the father showing his displeasure to the extent of, at times, refusing to see the mother until his anger has cooled with the passing of time.

The treatment of the body of a dead person before burial is much the same as among Europeans,

except that the body is buried the day death occurs, and should a person die at night, the body is buried the next morning. When a man dies, the moullahs (priests) are sent for, and they wash the body (this is usually done at the side of the nearest stream), lay it out, and wrap it in the burial-sheet ready for interment. The burial-sheet is called "kafn," which is a word similar to our "coffin." No coffin is used. After preparing the body for burial, the moullahs say the prayers for the dead over it, in which they are joined by all the relatives and others present, the relations are sent for as soon as it is seen that a person is dying, and then the body is placed on a charpoy (wooden bedstead) and carried to the nearest musjid on the road to the grayeyard, where the prayers for the dead are again said, after which the body is carried on to the burial-ground. Here the grave has been prepared beforehand, dug down some three feet, but recessed on one side at the bottom to receive the corpse, and as the earth must not fall on the body when filling the grave up, slabs of stone are placed against the recess. The body is laid on its side in the recess, with the face looking in the direction of Mecca, so that it may more easily see the beginning of the resurrection on the last day, and the grave is then filled up. According to Mussulmans, the resurrection on the last day begins at Mecca. A slab of stone about three feet by one foot, is placed at the head of the grave, but the stone is rough and uncut, and any

stone which is lying about is used, provided the shape is suitable. In the case of very important personages, a properly cut stone, setting forth the name of the person buried there, is placed at the head of the grave, and this used to be commonly done to mark the resting-places of other people, but the stones were taken by the late Amir for buildings, as they were of a good quality, and nice white colour, and so the practice fell into disuse.

After the burial, the relatives and friends gather in the house of the deceased person, and here they are entertained by the family, tea and food being provided for all who call to offer condolences, and to say the "fateah" or prayers for the dead, which it is customary to say on coming into the house. The expenses for these entertainments, and also those connected with marriages were so great, and brought so many into poverty, on account of all trying to do as well as, or better than their neighbours, whether they could afford it or not, that the present Amir made it a law that all such entertainments should cease, and instead of being in a way public affairs, should be made private, and guests include relatives only.

It sometimes happens that a person dies so poor that there is not enough money even to buy the "kafn" (burial-sheet), which is only a shilling or so, and his relatives have to go through the bazars begging for one, or money to buy one. This happens now more often than it used to, for the people are yearly getting poorer.

CHAPTER VII

AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN

Form of Government—Abuse of authority—Amir's food and drinking water and taster—Soldiers and horses always ready for flight—Amir's habits—Amir's amusements, attendants, etc.—Amir's feelings towards England—Amir's views on Afridi rising and Boer war—Amir's stratagem.

ABSOLUTE monarchy is the system of government in Afghanistan. Fortunately there are few parts of the earth where such a form of government exists, for it is not one which is likely to produce the greatest good for the greatest number.

In Afghanistan no one but the Amir can order the death penalty; no important question concerning the internal government of the country or its political relations with other countries can be dealt with or settled except by him; all matters of import emanating from the various State departments and offices must be referred to him for final judgment; all officers and officials required for the Government service in different parts of the country must be selected and appointed by him, and all prisoners accused of any crime of a serious nature must be tried and sentenced by him. Besides these duties there are innumerable other matters which require

his attention, of which the mere reading of the private reports from spies occupies several hours each day. From this it will be seen that the man who can carry out all these duties and give each question the consideration due to it without neglecting some matter or another of importance to the interests of the country, is one who requires a quickness in grasping the essential points of a question, and a capacity for work which are unequalled.

Amir Abdur Rahman was an exceptionally able man, and one who willingly gave the whole of his time and attention to the work required of him, working from the time he rose from his bed until he lay down again; but even so he was unable to see to all things himself, and the absence of responsible officials duly authorized to investigate and settle those matters which were not of sufficient moment to be taken before him for judgment, wasted much of the time which ought to have been devoted to important questions on which the welfare of the country depended. However, it is not surprising that the Amir was chary of putting too much authority in the hands of his officials, for those who had authority to judge minor cases invariably abused the authority given them, and the people who suffered through such abuse of authority, feared the enmity of the official too much to appeal to the Amir, and generally they were given cause to do so. As a case in point, I may mention that of a camel-owner who was brought before the city magistrate concerning

the non-payment of some Government duty. In this case the man was forced to pay the duty, besides having two of his camels confiscated, for the magistrate did a transport business with camels himself. The camel-owner was naturally incensed at the injustice of the whole proceeding, and wrote the particulars to the Amir, bribing an official to give in his application. Bribery must be resorted to in those cases where an official is the intermediary. All this was timely reported to the magistrate, who at once betook himself to durbar, and laid the case in his own way before the Amir, making out that the man was an old offender, and, to prevent him running away before his highness had judged his punishment, he had kept two of his camels as security. The letter the man had written was brought in just then and handed to the Amir; but the Amir's mind was prejudiced, and he saw in the man's statement—and an Afghan always overstates the case—an endeavour to injure the character of the magistrate in revenge for the latter doing his duty. The man was therefore put in prison, and the whole of his property was confiscated, so that he lost all he had instead of getting back the two camels first taken.

With the Amir it is always the man who gets in his story or complaint first who wins, for the Afghan mind is readily prejudiced and chary of relinquishing first impressions, no matter how much truth lies in what is said by the man who speaks last. It is such cases as these, and more often than not an appeal to

the higher power results in disaster to the applicant, which make the people chary of disputing the actions of the officials, and they therefore have to put up with as much justice as they can get, either by intrigue or bribery, and keep quiet, while the officials grow fat and rich, and become arrogant with continued prosperity, until one day they fly at game too high for them, and then come to grief and lose all, ending their days in prison or at the hands of the executioner. The late Amir one day told me that he trusted no one, and was so suspicious that he did not let his right hand know what the left one did; and with such men round him it is not surprising that he should have felt so.

Another thing which is further detrimental to the country lies in the officials being consulted on all matters concerning the interests of the people, for the Amir has no means of ascertaining the views and wishes of the people himself, and has to accept what his officials say, and this gives them the opportunity of bringing about that which is to their interest, and it is due to this selfish disregard of anything but their own profit that the officials force the people in yearly increasing numbers to give up the cultivation of their land and seek work elsewhere.

The Amir and the Government of Afghanistan are said by the people to be separate and distinct, and there is a public and a private treasury, on both of which the Amir draws, himself defining those expenses which are private, and those the Government

must defray; but here all distinction ends, and it is difficult to see wherein the difference lies. I have been told that the Amir is the head of the Government; but so far as I could see he was head, body, and everything else, excepting where officials and governors of provinces save him the trouble of looking into matters which are profitable to themselves. The Government stores chiefly contain the arms and ammunition made in the country or purchased elsewhere, while the private stores, in addition to those goods which are required for daily use, contain the valuable presents brought in from all parts of the country by the chiefs who visit the Amir, and those received from other Governments, and contain immense treasures. In the private stores also are all the latest novelties which have been sent for from India, and there are few articles in that way which are not to be found there. Very few, however, of the articles, except those of daily use, go into the stores and come out of it again, for most of the things are put away and forgotten, and neither the Amir nor his storekeepers know all that the stores contain, for there are no proper records kept except of articles of intrinsic value.

The late Amir was very particular about his palaces, and the dwelling-places he built for himself were the first well-constructed buildings in the country, and they were furnished in the richest European style, all furniture and upholstery being of the best he could get in India or make in his own country. He insisted

on all things about him being kept clean and tidy, and woe betide the unlucky slave boy who neglected his duty in that respect.

His food was cooked in the Government kitchens, which are kept guarded so that no one but those who are authorized to do so can enter, and the chief cook, with several soldiers, had to accompany the dishes from the kitchen to the palace (all dishes are served at once, and not in courses), and when placed before the Amir it was the cook's duty to taste of each dish to show that the food was innocent of poison. Several high officials always dined with the Amir, the latter being seated at a small table covered with a white cloth, while on the ground stretching away in front of his table a long cloth was laid which was covered by another white one, and here, on both sides, squatted or kneeled the officials, all of them, the Amir included, eating with the right hand. The hands are washed both before and after a meal. The very best and richest foods, in the way of pilaus and kabobs, were cooked, and all were seasoned with spices, and the bread was the usual Afghan nan (flat cake), but the Amir preferred white bread baked in small loaves similar to the English ones.

If an Englishman dined with the Amir he was given a separate table, and a Hindustani cook and his assistants prepared and served the food in the usual English way, while, for drink, he had the choice of various wines and spirits, which the Amir used to keep in the stores for such purpose, although he

himself always drank water, in accordance with the tenets of his religion.

The Amir's drinking water, as well as all food for him, was very carefully guarded. One man was held responsible for it, and had charge of the key of the room in which it was kept locked. The same was done with the tea, for which another man was responsible, and another, a hakeem (doctor), was responsible for all medicine, mixing it and bringing it to the Amir himself. The positions these men held were no sinecure, for if the Amir had any strange pain in his body they had a very unpleasant time of it until the pain was gone, or proved to be due to natural causes, and at such times these men went about with a strained look on their faces, for none knew what fancy might seize the Amir to their undoing.

The present Amir follows the same procedure as his father, but, owing to one or two plots against him, which fortunately came to nothing, all measures for safety are more strictly enforced, and all the men responsible for what the Amir eats and drinks wear a more harassed look.

One of the late Amir's precautions was to be always ready at a moment's notice either for fighting or travelling to any part of his kingdom, or out of it if needs be. For this purpose several horses (which were changed every few hours) were kept day and night in the stalls by the door of the palace ready saddled and bridled, requiring only the girths to be

tightened for mounting. Several fast mules were also kept ready in other stalls for carrying treasure, etc., on the journey. A cupboard with glass doors was kept by the head of the Amir's bed in which was stacked his best rifles, and with them boxes of ammunition, while under his pillow were two or three revolvers ready loaded, so that the Amir was ever ready for emergencies. In addition a picked company of sowars, called the "Hazarbash" guard (ever present), were always ready night and day outside the palace to accompany the Amir. This guard the Amir kept provisioned for a few days, so that they might start at any moment on a journey, and those on duty were relieved at intervals. The Amir's life had been an adventurous one, and it had taught him, and his experience in ruling his people had confirmed it, that it is wise to be ready at all times for anything that happens.

It was the Amir's custom to sit up working most of the night, and not to retire to rest until about four o'clock in the morning. He would then rise between twelve and two o'clock in the day, and, after dressing and taking food, would hold durbar. This habit of keeping awake most of the night was probably due to fear of a rising or treachery, which would be attempted at night rather than during the day, when all the people were about. Occasionally he held a public durbar in the salaam khana, a specially large audience chamber built in the garden outside Arak, and on these occasions any persons desirous of

petitioning him were allowed to come before him, and anything they had to say was listened to. The people who wanted to make personal application to the Amir were ushered in by the shagrasi, an official whose duty it was to present people to the Amir; but they had first to square the captain of the guard on the gate, and also certain other persons through whose hands they passed, before being allowed in. The Amir was a very hard worker, and opened and answered all letters as they came, and continued doing so, no matter what other business was in hand, until he slept. As soon as he was dressed each day people were brought before him either to state their grievances or for trial, and deputations from tribes in various parts of the country were received and listened to. He put off no work until a later date that was possible of completion, but tried to get each day's work finished *the same* day.

The Amir seldom spent much time in the harem serai amongst his women, it being his custom to devote an occasional evening to them only, and his opinion of women in general was not a high one. On some occasions he spoke rather plainly of the length, and lying propensities, of a woman's tongue, and her general inaptitude for anything of worth, and love of intrigue. Solomon eventually found little worth having in woman's society, and no doubt familiarity breeds contempt in more cases than his.

The Amir's amusements were few and simple. He would stop for a few weeks in turn, at each of his

summer palaces in the spring and early summer, to enjoy the air of the country and the scent of the flowers, of which he was passionately fond, and would eventually reach Baghibala, which is some four miles out of the city on the road to Paghman, and was his favourite summer palace, and would stop there until winter drove him back to the warmer city palaces. The Amir always had flowers in the room where he was, and in winter and spring when there were no flowers in Kabul, he had them sent from Jelalabad and other places which are at a lower altitude than Kabul and have a warmer climate. One day when I was with the Amir, he spoke of some flowers beside him, and taking one of them smelt it, and found it had no scent. The gardener was ordered to be sent for, and he came in with pale face and knees knocking against each other, for having no knowledge of the reason why he was wanted, he no doubt feared the most, and probably he was the same as others in having done more than he would care for the Amir to know. When the Amir looked up from his reading and saw the gardener, he asked why the flowers had no smell, and the gardener, at a loss to reply, could only lick his dry lips as he sought an excuse. The Amir, however, told him of a certain manure he was always to use, and bade him beware if the flowers had no scent the following year, and then told him to return to his work.

Occasionally the Amir would drive or be carried out to the chaman (marshy plain) where duck

shooting was obtainable, but during the last few years of his reign he was seldom equal to the exertion of doing so, for he suffered almost constantly from gout and its accompanying ailments. His indoor amusements were chess, of which he was so able an exponent that few in his court could compete with him, and his only other amusement was in listening to or telling stories, and joking with one and another of the officials, during the occasional free-and-easy hour following dinner, when the Amir became as one of those surrounding him, and gave himself up to jest and repartee, before again assuming the duties and dignity of the head of the State. One of the recognized members of his suite was the court jester, who was dressed, however, as others were, and not in cap and bells, whose duty it was to joke and make merry when the Amir was so inclined. The jokes and stories, and the gestures used to illustrate the stories were, however, always too broad for those who are delicately inclined. This may be the outcome of the want of women's refining influence, for women, of course, are never present in such gatherings, and men mingle with men, and see no women except those of their own house. Jesters were also among the retinues of the princes; but, without the restraining influence of the Amir to keep them a little in check, the jokes of these men were not even fit for a barrack-room.

The attendants with the Amir, or ghulam bachaha (slave boys), as they are called, are mostly the sons

of chiefs. These boys are given to the Amir for his use, and are trained in his service, and when they grow up, are given civil or military appointments. These attendants, besides waiting on the Amir, had charge of various duties, some being placed in charge of the lamps and candles, others the carpets, others books and papers, others arms, etc.; and each was held responsible for the proper conduct and safe keeping of that in his charge. Neglect of duty or other offence was punished at once, and often severely. In one case, some boys were stripped of their clothes and tied to trees in the garden, and kept there the greater part of a winter night. Another, a storekeeper, had his nose cut off for stealing some of the articles in his charge. All had to be cleanly dressed, and while in the Amir's presence, had to keep silence, and walk or move about without noise. Their clothes were gaudy, being mostly of coloured velvets, with plenty of gold lace and fur trimmings, and their turbans or hats were of the richest description. The present Amir, who is fond of plain dress and quiet colours, has his attendants dressed in black clothes cut in the fashion of frock-suits, the frock-coats being rather long and more in the Turkish official style, while among the officials generally a similar style of dress is worn, except when a man has a position which entitles him to a uniform, which pleases him best the more gold lace it has. There were many officials, as well as slave boys, who dressed in velvets in the court of

Amir Abdur Rahman, and on a durbar day they presented a gay appearance, so far as dress was concerned.

After '97 the Amir's feelings towards England and the English changed, and those of his court had to see that they conducted themselves as comported with his mood. Sirdar Mahomed Omar told his half-brother, Sirdar Aminoolah, one day at that time, not to go before his father in the English gaiters he was wearing, and to be careful not to wear anything English on such occasions. The Amir was greatly disappointed in the failure of Sirdar Nasrullah Khan's mission to England in '95, which was chiefly to obtain consent to an Afghan envoy being appointed in London. As this meant dealing over the head of the Indian Government, it was negatived by the English authorities. Also the letters he received from the Indian Government, concerning his participation in the Afridi rising on the borders, in August, '97, were bitter to him. One, which plainly hinted at the loss of his throne, if such happenings occurred again, he read out in public durbar held for the occasion, and to which all leading men were summoned, and after reading it, he accused his people of doing that which brought upon him disgrace at the hands of his ally. About this time he sent for me, and spoke for several hours on the Afridi rising, and the trouble the border tribes had caused him, and seemed particularly bitter against the Haddah moullah, Maulavi Najmudeen Aghondzada,

who was the principal instigator of the rising. He said that since he came to the throne, rebellions had been frequent, and though each revolt had been put down with a strong hand (those who know the Amir's methods will understand what his "strong hand" meant), it had not been sufficient to prevent further risings, for his people were not only the most unruly, but the most fanatical of all people. As to his having participated in forwarding the rising, the Amir argued that the people once risen and flushed with any little success, would become beyond the control of any man, and there were old scores to be wiped off between the border tribes and the Afghans, so that any rising was a menace to himself. And in addition to this, a rising in one part of the country would undoubtedly lead to similar risings and revolt in other parts, and it was only by his firm ruling and the stringent methods adopted towards those who sought to agitate the people, that the country was kept quiet.

The Amir said that no one knew to what country the Haddah moullah belonged, for he had no known relations, and during Shere Ali's reign the moullah had been allowed to do much as he liked with the people, and raise revolt at his pleasure. He himself, however, had made inquiries, and found out the moullah's mode of procedure, and had arranged to capture him, but the moullah received timely information of his intention, and escaped across the frontier, where he shortly afterwards raised the

Shinwari and other tribes against him, and for some months gave considerable trouble, and it was not until four thousand or so had been killed that the tribes were quieted. And this was the man whose actions he was held responsible for.

The Haddah moullah had great influence with the tribes, the Amir said, and had sent agents to the Jelalabad and Laghman districts, where they induced some three thousand men to join them, but the governor of Jelalabad got news of it and stopped them, and on asking by whose permission they were going on this jihad (religious war), they replied that they were told by the agents of the moullah the Amir had given permission. The Amir said that of their leaders he had four sheikhs and two maliks, who carried the green jihad flag, in prison in Kabul, and he knew what to do with them, but the other leaders had escaped.

It was on this occasion that two men were brought in before the Amir as refugees from India, who had returned according to the amnesty issued by the Amir a few years before to all who had been driven out of the country; but the Amir said that the men were lying, and he had ample proof that they were spies from Ayoob Khan, who wanted reports of all said and done in his durbar. He said that both Ayoob Khan and Yakoob Khan yearly spent large sums of money in trying to get information of what he was doing, and to show how little he feared their influence, the Amir said: "If they

will pay their money to me I will send them weekly or monthly reports, and give them all news of what happens, and my reports will be true ones, for no one else knows what I do or intend doing, and not even my most trusted officials know of any secret matters of importance."

The Amir's great wish, as he often expressed it when I have been in durbar, was to make his country rich by developing all its resources and bringing it on a level with other countries, and had he been gifted with health no doubt much would have been done towards it; but he was confined to his room mostly, and had to depend on his officials for information, and they proved a poor staff to lean on.

In another letter the Amir received about this time from the Indian Government, he told me that it was written that he had been faithful for twenty years, and yet in the same letter it was also written that he was buying too much war material, and that the Parliament in England would perhaps get suspicious. He could not reconcile these two statements, and said he came to the country as ruler without arms, and was recognized and acknowledged as Amir by the English, and his first act as ruler was to help them in providing for General Roberts' army on its march from Kabul to Kandahar by giving orders all along the route to the maliks, and others in authority, to bring in provisions for the English army at each camping place, and in no way

to molest them, whereby the English were enabled to march rapidly and without trouble to Kandahar. According to his treaty with the English it was necessary for them to furnish him with the latest arms to enable him to stand as her ally between her and Russia; but, instead of having them given to him, he had bought war material himself, and was now told not to do so. When the Russians extended their railway to Khuskh, they asked him to take advantage of it by trading that way, and he sent a copy of the letter to the Indian Government, asking what answer he should give, and they replied, "Give no answer;" but he was forced to reply or it might end in trouble or war, so he replied to the Russians that they had constructed this railway without consulting him, and had they done so in time he would have asked his merchants and people their opinion and what they wished, but they had made the railway for their own convenience, and his country did not want it, as their camels and pack-horses were sufficient for their own needs. He said he sent a copy of his reply to the Indian Government, who wrote back to say he had done well. He said he did not blame the English officials for what they wrote, because they were under the orders of the Parliament, but his idea of the Parliament was that it was like the Kabul public hamam (Turkish bath), where many are speaking at once, and the reverberations of sound from the big dome overhead mingles one man's talk with that of

others, so that all sequence of speech is lost in the confusion of sounds.

The great Boer War had just commenced at that time, and the Amir said he had spent several nights in anxious thought, for it seemed possible that the Russians might take advantage of this to advance through his country on India, but when he put himself in the place of the Russians and viewed the situation from their side, and he had spent many years in exile in Russia, and knew them and their ways and policy, he found much to fear from Afghanistan, for a war with them meant a general rising of Islam, which would spread to Russian Asia, and they had not enough troops for all that this meant, for the Mussulman countries she had conquered were insecurely held, and the people hated their conquerors, and as the Afghans would prefer death to being enslaved, and their women and children taken, it would be too great an undertaking to quell these risings, and fight Afghanistan and India at the same time.

About the Boer War he said he was very much grieved to hear of the number of troops lost. He had had a large experience in fighting, and from the different pictures and plans he had seen, he thought the fighting arrangements were not good, for the Boers were entrenched and hidden, and the English advanced on them in the open, and as the bodies of men are not made of steel, it is impossible to stand against the hail of bullets which modern

weapons storm out every minute. He said he could send fifty thousand troops to help the British, but Afghans are unused to ships, and would be demoralized if sent in them, but England must always remember that he was ready to fight for her on his side or in India. He once told me an anecdote of the time when he was in Russia, and the Russo-Turkish War was raging. He was asked to join the Russian army with his followers in this war, for they told him they had heard that he was a great general, and would like to test his powers. But he was in no mood to fight for the Russians, particularly as they were fighting against his co-religionists, so he replied that to fight on their side would give them no opportunity of testing his merits and bravery, for all the Russians were brave and good fighters, and he would be one among many. Therefore it was better they should let him fight on the enemy's side, and then when he was fighting against them, his ability, or want of it, would be made apparent, and they could judge for themselves. They asked him no more, he said.

In speaking of the foregoing matters the Amir said these and other anxieties were hard for one man to bear. He had to be strong enough to fight Russia both for the sake of his country, and because of his treaty with the English, and yet he was told he was buying too much war material. He tried to keep on the best of terms with his alley, and was told he stirred up the tribes to fight

against them. Then, again, he had many reforms at heart for the benefit of his country, and his own officials were unreliable, and he could not ascertain the true wishes and views of the people, so that he might alter those laws which pressed upon them, and help them to better themselves, and yet he must strive that his people live in peace, security, and prosperity.

Although Amir Abdur Rahman was an exceptionally able man, he had received little or no education and training, except in the hard school of adversity, and the history of his adventures and adversities until he was made Amir would form a stirring romance. He was undoubtedly the strongest ruler Afghanistan has known, for when he came to the throne lawlessness reigned and had reigned for all time throughout the country, and no man's life was safe who could not protect himself, and when he died a solitary traveller might journey from one end of the country to the other in safety. He was also a man of great personal courage, as those who fought against him knew, and he was relentless in vengeance for any wrong done him.

He told me an anecdote one day of when he was at war with other members of his family and had lost all but a remnant of his followers. He had taken refuge in a village fort, and one of his followers had treacherously betrayed his whereabouts to his enemy, who came that night with a large number of soldiers, and surrounding the fort, clamoured at the

gate for his surrender. He was without provisions for his men and horses, and was greatly outnumbered, so that fighting was useless, and he determined on stratagem as a means of getting out of the difficulty, for his capture, he knew, meant death. So putting on a large posteen (sheepskin coat) which covers the body down to the feet, and is usually worn at night, covering the head as well as the body, he had himself let out of a small door at the side of the fort, and with a pistol in his hand which he kept hidden under the sheepskin he mingled with the soldiers outside, who did not molest him thinking he was one of themselves. Eventually he came to where his enemy was standing, and watching his opportunity when none of the others were near he seized him from behind, and clapping the pistol to the back of his head, ordered him to make no outcry or instant death would follow, and then by roundabout ways he led his prisoner to the small door he came out from, and got him into the fort. Here, as a condition of life, he made him give orders from the wall for his followers to retire to a considerable distance, and thereafter he effected his escape and got clear away with his men.

The Amir was a good judge of character, and was fond of reading the characters of men he had never seen from their photos, and in those cases where I knew the men, whose photo he was studying, his reading of their character was mostly correct. He had a great admiration for Gladstone, Bismarck, and

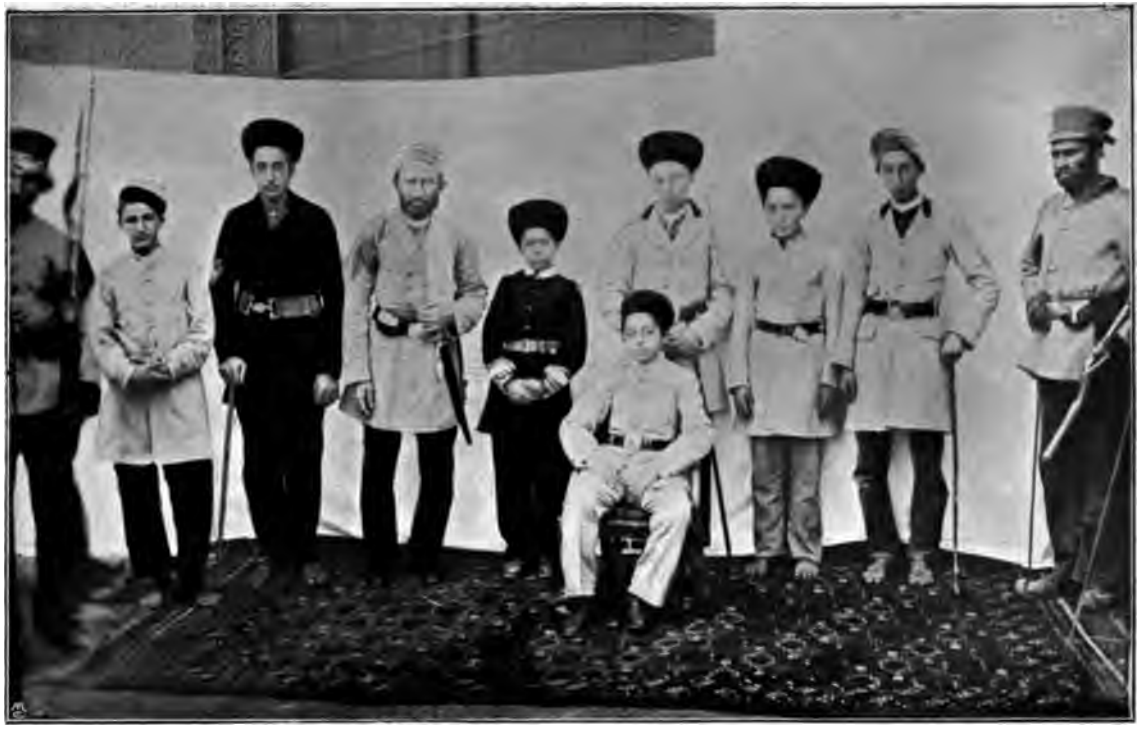
McMahon, and said they were the leading men of their time. There were few generals he admired, subjecting most to a good deal of adverse criticism, but General White's defence of Ladysmith, he said, was the most brilliant achievement of the Boer War.

CHAPTER VIII

AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN—*continued*

Amir's sons and his treatment of them—Princes and their duties and durbars—Food supplied by Government to members of royal family—How officials are paid—Civil and military titles—Court life and officials—Law courts—Amir's lingering illness, death and burial—Rumours of rising—Fears of populace—Burial of household treasures—Plots to get body—Coronation of Amir Habibullah—New Amir's promises of reform—Amusements.

THERE are five sons of the Amir living; Habibullah (the present Amir), and Nasrullah (who was sent to London), both sons of one wife; Aminoolah, the son of a Chitrali wife; Mahomed Ali, the son of a Turkestani wife, who has lived mostly in Turkistan, and is seldom heard of; and Mahomed Omar, the son of the Queen-Sultana. The Amir, although always treating his sons in a kindly manner, was never familiar with them, and his attitude towards them was that of king to subject, rather than father to son. If they committed a blunder or offended in the discharge of their duties, he punished by ordering them not to show themselves in durbar, and so kept them under the ban of his displeasure for a longer or shorter time, which he ended by sending them an order to come to him, and then the one in



PRINCE INIATULLAH (ELDEST SON OF AMIR HABIBULLAH KHAN) AND STAFF.

[*To face p.* 120.

disgrace would come and kneel before his father, and be allowed to kiss his hand in recognition of forgiveness.

The Amir gave his sons high official positions with proportionate salaries, but in no way allowed them to become influential, or to exercise unlimited power. Many of the chief officials had greater authority than the Amir's sons, and treated the princes with scant courtesy, particularly towards the end of the Amir's reign. Sirdar Habibullah was the nominal head of the army, and chief officer of all workshops; Sirdar Nasrullah was head of all the offices and mirzas (writers or clerks), and the others held minor appointments.

The princes held their own durbars, which many officials and officers attended, either in connection with their duties or to "salaam" the princes. They all had separate houses situated in the new part of the city, and the two elder ones had country houses also, in which they used to spend part of the summer. Sirdar Nasrullah, after his return from London, had his salary increased, and shortly afterwards built a new house for himself on the lines of the house he had stopped in during his stay in London (Dorchester House in Park Lane). In arrangement and upholstery, the house was the best in Kabul, and on its completion, the Amir stopped there for a few days as the prince's guest, and was delighted with it all, for the Amir greatly admired good architecture, and his own buildings

were the only innovations on the old mud and brick dwellings common to the country, which had sufficed for former rulers.

All the members of the royal family, that is, the whole of the Mahomedzai family, received an allowance from the Government. Four hundred rupees a year (about £12 10*s.*) was allowed to each boy, and three hundred to each girl, and food from the royal kitchen was also supplied to the greater number of them; but this was stopped under the *régime* of the present Amir, and a further allowance in money granted instead. The greater scarcity of food, and its consequent dearness, was the chief reason for doing so.

The officials of the Government and others attached to the Amir received salaries of from two hundred to six thousand a year, and although many have incomes derived from their own lands, they all live beyond their apparent income, the surplus being obtained in ways best known to themselves; usually, the greater the rascal the greater the income. Formerly the salaries of the officials were paid by barats (orders) on the revenue due from different lands in the country, and the officials had to collect this themselves, whereby the expenses of revenue officers were spared the Government. But eventually one of the highest officials used to buy up all these barats, charging so much per cent. discount, and collect the whole, a proceeding profitable to himself, but detrimental to the interests of the country, as his

agents left the ryots (cultivators) nothing to live on, more often than not, and caused many of them to leave their bit of land and seek employment elsewhere. This wholesale robbery by the collectors of revenue is one of the chief causes of the present low state of the exchequer.

Officials are given titles according to the work or department they have charge of, but in addition many receive the title of colonel or brigadier, or other military title, without being attached to a regiment, and these are called Civil officers. All officers of the army and officials are given a feast once a year, on the occasion of the jeshan, or celebration of the anniversary of the Amir's title of "Light of religion and faith," and on this occasion all men are received in durbar, and are afterwards given a dinner, and as the palace will not hold all, the bulk of them sit in the adjacent gardens, and their dinner is served to them there.

The officials in their treatment of the English residents in Kabul, reflect the mind of the Amir and his attitude towards the English Government, and when the Amir happens to be prejudiced against the Indian Government, on account of their attitude towards him being firmer than is consistent with the consideration he considers due to himself, the English in Kabul are included in his displeasure, and all officials follow the lead of their master by being scant of courtesy, to the verge of rudeness. At other times, when the English are in favour, the officials

are profuse in their offers of service. Among themselves, when one official is in high favour with the Amir, and they all take their turn at that, for no one of them is in favour long, the favoured one is fawned on and flattered by all the rest of them, but in their hearts they hate him, and plot his downfall at the time they flatter him.

The Law Courts of the country, if they can be called so, are divided into two sorts. Offences against or cases pertaining to their religion are first tried in the court of the Khan-i-Moullah (chief moullah), and if beyond his powers, are referred to the chief Sirdar, and afterwards to the Amir. Offences against the law are tried in the court of the Kotwal (city magistrate), and those cases beyond his powers are also referred to the chief Sirdar, and again by him, if beyond his jurisdiction, to the Amir. For social offences persons are tried by their peers; the commoner by commoners, and the khan (chief) by khans. To the above courts the present Amir has added a special jury to try those cases which would otherwise be referred to him, and this jury, although given special powers to act, must send their findings to the Amir for confirmation. The present Amir has also formed a parliament consisting of about thirty heads of departments, who discuss the laws requiring reform, and when, after the discussion, a majority is in favour of any alteration, the proposed new law is written down for the sanction of the Amir, who afterwards confirms it or otherwise, but mostly otherwise

in those cases I heard of. To the parliament is also delegated the trial of those cases which involve the sifting of much evidence, and take time, the finding of the parliament, as in other cases, having to be confirmed by the Amir. Another jury has also been appointed to try those cases of prisoners who have been imprisoned without trial, of which there are many in Kabul, where prisoners of all sorts generally average between twenty and thirty thousand, with orders to report fully to the Amir on each case.

For the last ten years of his life the gout that the Amir suffered from gradually took greater hold of him, and he could walk but very little, and had to be carried whenever he went any distance, while for the last two or three years he was unable to stand, and had to be carried about, even in the room. He got gradually weaker also, through the repeated attacks of illness, which came on at shorter and shorter intervals, and gradually, too, his brain became affected, until it was only at times that he was able to think or reason clearly. In this condition he had to rely still more on his officials, and eventually the power of the government practically lay in the hands of three of them, who in the Amir's weakened condition had gained his confidence, and were able to turn his mind in any direction they pleased. These men, as the habit of the country is, usurped the power they had while it was theirs, until their conduct became so arrogant that they made themselves

very unpopular. One of them even went so far as to take away by force the carpenters and carts at work on Sirdar Habibullah's new house, giving the Amir's name as the excuse, and knowing the Amir was not in the condition to properly listen to his son's complaint, even if the son had the audacity to place the matter before his father. This man was degraded from his office soon after Sirdar Habibullah became Amir.

Eventually, in the spring of 1901, Amir Abdur Rahman suddenly had a stroke, and it was thought that it was all over with him; but he rallied, and lingered on until some six months later, when, on October 1, he died, and it was said that his feet were dead a few days before, and the stench from them was such that no one could stop long in the same room with him. On the day when the Amir lay dying, and it was seen that there was no hope of recovery, Sirdar Habibullah and Sirdar Nasrullah, together with several of the leading officials, held a consultation, and decided upon the steps to be taken immediately the Amir's life had passed, for trouble and revolt were confidently expected as soon as it became known for a fact by the people that the Amir was dead, and also it was expected that the Queen-Sultana would try to get the army to side with her in getting her son Mahomed Omar crowned Amir; she had a good deal of influence, and was popular with most people. It was decided at this council that Sirdar Habibullah was to succeed his

father, and that when the Amir was dead he should at once occupy the fortified palace of Arak, in which is the treasury, together with the stores of modern arms, for the possession of that would make him practically master of the situation, and when there, even should the soldiers rise, as was feared, there was the possibility of holding out until matters quieted down, and terms could be arranged.

At the time of the Amir's death, which occurred at night, all the princes and the leading officials were present in an ante-room of the Baghibala palace, where the Amir lay, having been present from the afternoon, when they were summoned from their council with the announcement that the Amir could not last much longer. When those who were watching came in and announced that the Amir was dead, one of the chief officials present took the late Amir's hat, and putting it on Sirdar Habibullah's head, declared him Amir, upon which all present, taking his hand in turn, gave the vows of allegiance, and called him Amir, and another of them, going into an adjoining room, where Sirdar Mahomed Omar sat, brought him in, and told him to acknowledge the new Amir, which he did, giving the vows as the others had. That official earned the Queen-Sultana's undying hatred for doing this.

The new Amir then went to the city, with most of the officials and his own followers, and occupied Arak, having already arranged matters with the brigadier in charge of the picked troops there, and who was

soon after raised to the rank of colonel. Sirdar Nasrullah Khan was left at Baghibala that night to superintend the removal to Arak of all furniture, carpets, ornaments, etc. This he did the same night by carts, and in the morning he brought in the Amir's body to Arak also, but while doing so was escorted by a strong force of cavalry, in case the news of the Amir's death should have leaked out, and a rising be precipitated by the sight of the body being carried in.

That day, too, the furniture of the Queen-Sultana was sent from the harem serai inside Arak to her palace, Gulistan Serai, just outside the walls, and the new Amir's wives were installed in Arak. It was then publicly announced that the Amir was dead, and all offices, works, and shops were closed, and it was also announced that the funeral would take place that day. In view of possible emergencies the guard of seven men with each European was doubled the day the Amir lay dying by another guard from the Ardeel regiment, from whom are drawn the outer guards for the royal palaces and harems, and who are looked upon as reliable men.

It was confidently expected by the people of all classes in Kabul that the death of the Amir would be the signal for a general insurrection, in which the army would lead, and, no doubt, it was not mere conjecture which led all people to expect it. To safeguard themselves as far as possible against the consequences of such riot and revolt, the people

buried their jewels and treasures in the floors of their houses, and got in as large a supply of flour, food, and fuel, as they could afford. They also brought out all the arms they possessed for each man intending holding his own house as a fort during the riots. Wild-looking, scantily dressed men came down in numbers from the mountains, carrying battle-axes and old flintlocks, and overran Kabul and the roads round about, for the news of the Amir's death had acted on them like the sight of a dead carcase on vultures, and caused them to flock round from great distances in an incredibly short space of time to see what loot was going. These are the people who are feared by the inhabitants of Kabul when disturbances set in, for they come in thousands, naked, practically, and having nothing to lose but life, which they value little, loot all, rich and poor alike, for the poor of Kabul are like princes for wealth to them. They even demolish houses for the sake of the wood used in their construction, and the house in which I lived had once been rased to the ground by them, and been rebuilt by the Government.

I was told that there was a plot on foot to get the Amir's body on the way to the tomb, which he had built outside Kabul at Kila Asham Khan some years before, and cut it into pieces that dogs might eat it. (This is looked upon as the greatest evil that can befall the body of a Mussulman.) The road from Kabul leading to Kila Asham Khan, and

the hills along the route, were black with people about two o'clock that day, waiting for the funeral procession to pass, and there was a general air of suppressed excitement among all the people as the time fixed for the funeral drew near, which showed itself in a quickness of movement and alert look, foreign to their usual leisurely style, and betrayed the nervous excitement under which all laboured. However, news of all this having reached the authorities, the late Amir's body was buried instead in the east wing of the Boistan Serai Palace, which is just outside Arak and alongside the Queen-Sultana's palace, and the day passed without anything untoward happening.

There were six Europeans in Kabul at the time of the Amir's death—Mrs. Daly, the lady doctor, Mr. Fleischer, a German (murdered there in 1904), with his wife, child, and nurse, and myself—and the question was discussed as to what should be done in case of a rising, and although we talked the matter over thoroughly, we could see no means of escape from the city or the country, and there seemed nothing to be done to safeguard ourselves but to decide on getting all together in one house as soon as rioting started, provided we had sufficient time to do so, and barricade and defend that as long as possible, for the European residents would be among the first to be attacked, and the guards could not be depended on to fight for the infidel against their own people when once

order was overthrown. We knew that, so long as the soldiers remained faithful to the Amir, there would be no rising which could not be easily quelled, but if the soldiers rose against the Amir, then the guards, with the Europeans, would no doubt shoot down the kafirs to begin with, and, in fact, one of the guards threatened a servant of Mrs. Daly's that as soon as fighting commenced, they would kill the servants of the Europeans first, and the Europeans afterwards. I had obtained a quantity of Martini-Henri cartridges from the workshops for the use of the guard with me in case they were attacked by the people, and at the time of the funeral they were very anxious I should serve these out to them at once; but I preferred waiting to see the course events would take before giving them the means to make themselves dangerous to me, and others with me, in the event of the army revolting, and told them to keep their minds at rest, for the cartridges would be served out in time enough for use when wanted. Undoubtedly the soldiers were ready to revolt, and intended doing so, if any one could be got to lead them, and each regiment expected the others to commence the rising, and were ready to join them when they did so, but there was no combination among them, and no man had sufficient courage to take the lead. The officers of the guards, who came round to my house on the day of the funeral to see that all precautions for safety were taken, and posted some of the guards

on the roof whence they could command the neighbouring houses, told me to be ready for any emergency, as from all they heard it was likely enough that I, with many of themselves, would be killed before the night. Also, to prevent any disturbance being precipitated by an attack on the Europeans, the other Europeans and myself were told to keep in the house, and not go into the bazars on any account.

On the day following the burial of the Amir, October 3, 1901, Sirdar Habibullah, the eldest son of Amir Abdur Rahman, who was then about thirty-two years of age, was formally made Amir. The ceremony took place in the Salaam khana, outside the walls of the Arak palace, in the presence of all the princes, officials, principal army officers, chiefs, and khans of tribes. There was no display of colour, and the princes, officials, and others who had them wore black clothes, while others had white clothes and some those of a dark colour. It is not the Afghan custom to wear black as mourning, except on the death of a king, and it is then worn for three days. The ceremony consisted of two parts, the religious and the civil.

The religious ceremony was performed by the chief moullah of the Juma Musjid, and was commenced by all those present joining in prayers. Then the moullah wound a lungi (headcloth) of white muslin round the Sirdar's head, after which the Koran and holy relics of the Prophet (a coat and

some hair) and a flag from the tomb of a saint were presented him, after which the moullah announced him to be the duly elected Amir of Afghanistan. The flag from the tomb of a saint was one brought by the late Amir from a holy grave in Turkistan, all such graves having poles on which small flags and streamers are fastened, stuck in the ground around them. The late Amir had camped near by when on his way from Russia to Kabul, and during the night had dreamed that he would be successful in his quest for the throne of Afghanistan, and so had brought one of the flags from the grave as both a memento and a charm.

The civil ceremony was performed by Sirdar Nasrullah (the new Amir's full brother), who placed the late Amir's hat on the new Amir's head. This hat was of black Astrakan skin, and on one side of it was the diamond star, presented to the late Amir by the members of the royal family on the occasion of his receiving the title of " Light of Religion and Faith." The late Amir's belt was next fastened round his waist and his father's sword was presented him. The hat, sword, and belt which had previously been worn by the new Amir, were given to Sirdar Nasrullah, and Sirdar Nasrullah's hat, sword, and belt were given to Sirdar Mahomed Omar, who was the youngest son. The Amir then made a speech, in which he said that he intended to hold the country intact, to resent foreign aggression, and to put in hand such reforms that the people of the country would become

prosperous, and he would also abolish the hated spy system, which had till then prevailed, and by which no man was safe. A great cheer was raised on this, a very unusual thing for the Afghans, but the abolition of the spy system meant peace and security for them all. The oath of allegiance to the Amir was then sworn on the Koran by all those present, and the ceremony ended in the customary way by all partaking of food. For weeks afterwards the city was full of men from different parts of the country, chiefs of tribes, governors of cities, head men of villages, etc., all come to take the oath of allegiance to the Amir, and to all who did so, the customary "khilat" or robes of honour were given. These are something in the fashion of cloaks, made of brown, blue, or green cloth and embroidered with gold braid. Some of the men were so poor that they were dressed in little better than rags, which were washed clean for the occasion, and wore mocassins of undressed leather instead of boots, and they all looked a little sheepish and yet proud, as they strolled about the streets in their khilat. Many tailors are constantly kept at work in Kabul making khilats, which are given to any one whom the Amir desires to honour, and some of the khilats are very rich, being made of a fine hand-stitched cloth imported from Cashmere, and heavily embroidered with gold lace and lined with silk and fur. These khilats cost many hundreds of rupees.

All the leading moullahs of the country were

collected in Kabul, and to them khilats were also given, and the new Amir paid them much attention, for the moullahs are an influential section of the community, who are able to sway the minds of the people and lead them in any direction they choose. Three or four of the oldest and holiest of the moullahs were appointed to stop at the late Amir's tomb and pray there, and it was afterwards said by some of the people that the tomb, to which all had access to pray for his soul, had blue flames coming out of it, and this was a sure proof that his spirit was in Hades. However, the tomb was three times set on fire by some persons unknown who wished to disgrace it, and that caused it to be commonly said that the heat of the Amir's soul was the cause of the fires. It was impossible for an able ruler like the late Amir to forcibly bring a lawless people into the right way of behaviour without making many hate as well as fear him, and those who feared him when alive were not slow to try and disgrace his name when dead, and beyond the power of retaliation.

The soldiers, however, were far from satisfied and content, and on the day Sirdar Habibullah was proclaimed Amir before all the troops, the Momundzai regiment raised the battle cry, but it was not taken up by other regiments and nothing came of it. The men of the Ardeel regiment, who were against any disturbance or revolt, were repeatedly asked by other regiments to join them in rising,

being told that if they did not do so, the rest of them could do nothing, for the rising must be universal, and they did not want to fight one against the other, but with the object of doing away with the present reigning family and getting other government, but the Ardeel regiment remained true to their king, and refused to have anything to do with it, but many of them were dissatisfied and inclined to side with the rest of the troops, most of whom openly said that if the English came into the country they would not fight for their present ruler, but would put down their arms and go over to them. The new Amir, to quell the discontent of the army, made known his intention of increasing the pay of all men, and I overheard some of the soldiers in the workshops discussing what they would do if he did not keep his promise, or the increase was not sufficient, and no doubt their attitude was representative. Their pay was eight rupees Kabuli a month (5*s.* 4*d.*), and one man said that nothing under twelve rupees a month would satisfy him, and if he did not get that he would join the others. The pay of the soldiers was raised soon afterwards to ten rupees Kabuli a month; but the increase was considered insufficient, and the discontent continued, and on the following Roz-i-Eid, when Sirdar Nasrullah inspected the troops, in place of the Amir who was unwell, and gave the men the customary greeting in the name of the Amir, no one responded, and for a time the situation seemed critical, but Sirdar

Nasrullah went on with the inspection as though nothing had happened, and the review passed off without anything further of an unpleasant nature occurring.

The new Amir made many promises of reform which were not fulfilled, and the winter following his accession to the throne was a dry one, and practically no snow fell. This caused a failure of the supply of water from melted snow in the mountains which was necessary for irrigation during the ensuing spring, and consequently the crops failed. Famine of course followed, and very many of the people died of starvation. Then cholera came at the time food was scarcest, and thousands were carried off in a few weeks, and the general discontent among the people increased, for all the misery they suffered was put down to the Amir as being an unlucky ruler. Some plots aimed at the Amir's life were discovered, and the Amir kept himself close in Arak, and seldom showed himself, spending much time in the harem serai reading private reports from spies, and leaving the Government business to take care of itself, and this further increased the discontent. Also, fearing treachery, he allowed no one but specially appointed men to come into his presence, and for people who had complaints to make, he instituted a system whereby a stamped paper, on which to write an application, was to be purchased from the Kotwali office, and it was promised that such would receive attention. They were, when

written, to be placed in a box outside the Kotwali station, whence they would be collected by the Kotwal daily and forwarded on to him. But the people complained that although it was stated that such applications would be answered at once, they had to pay for stamps and yet got no answer, or if an answer was given, it was indefinite and neither granted nor refused their request, so eventually the system fell into disrepute, for the people argued, why spend money on a stamp when it is most probable that we shall get no redress?

Under the late Amir it was usual for people to be allowed to present petitions when meeting him on the road, or returning from the musjid on a Friday (the Mussulman Sunday), and this he encouraged, and he even went so far when he first came to the throne as to call all men, even sweepers, "brother." The new Amir, however, would not allow it, and had proclamation made that any man who petitioned him on the road would be imprisoned, and this was done to some who disregarded the order. The consequence was that the people felt themselves cut off from their king, for they could get no speech with him, and their written complaints were neglected, so they must suffer, whatever happened, without hope of redress, and then they lost heart, and that the Amir Sahib had forgotten and cared nothing for them. The Afghans, in many things, are a long-suffering people, and their religion, which teaches them that the Amir is their spiritual head, and may do as it so pleases him, is no

doubt responsible for their putting up with a state of affairs which would cause any other people to take matters into their own hands; but they are very clannish, and will suffer from one of their own chiefs that which would rouse them to frenzy from any one else.

The present Amir is fond of outdoor sports, and, considering his bulk, for although not more than five and a half feet in height he is very stout and broad and has rather short legs, he can stand a good deal of exercise. His principal amusement is cooking, and this is general with all other men of the country, and it is said that he can cook better than those appointed for the work. Fridays are usually devoted to this amusement, all his retinue helping in the preparation of the viands, which, when cooked, they sit down and eat together. The Amir also drives his own dog-cart at times, and occasionally goes out hawking and shooting. Formerly, when game was plentiful, he not infrequently used to camp out for a few days, but since his coming to the throne he has done very little shooting, and then of an evening only.

Once, towards the end of the cholera epidemic, he went out to his shooting-box at Pul-i-Bagrami, about six miles north-east of Kabul, and stayed there for several weeks, his attendants, together with the officials and guards, having to live under canvas, where they had a cold time of it as the winter approached. While there, one of the state elephants went "mast" (mad) and, killing his mahout, raged

through the camp, putting all to flight who came in his way. The Amir's shagrassi, a relation of his own, and by way of being a bit mad-headed himself, called to the Amir that he would kill the elephant, and, seizing his sword and springing on his horse, he shouted to some twenty sowars or so to follow him, and together they charged over to the elephant, but the latter, when he saw them, charged them in turn. The Afghan horses cannot stand elephants, and scattered in all directions when they saw him coming down on them, and for the next few minutes the scene was a lively one, with the elephant chasing first one and then the other, while the frantic efforts of men and horses to get out of the way, jumping ditches and watercourses, and crashing through the hedges of young trees about, caused a good deal of laughter from the onlookers in spite of the danger they ran. Eventually the elephant was lured to a deep pit which had been dug for him and covered over with boughs and grass, and there he fell in and lay, trapped. After some consultation it was decided to give the elephant four pounds of camphor, four pounds of opium, and four pounds of chirs (a preparation from hemp something like opium), to quieten its lust; and this was done. Next morning the elephant was dead, and this was an unlooked-for result, although it was a natural one when the quantities of the drugs are considered; however, the Afghans believe in large doses of medicine to effect a real cure.

Amir Habibullah Khan takes an interest in tennis

and cricket, but mostly in cricket, for it resembles the national game of toopbazee, which is also played with a ball and flat stick. Another amusement the Amir is interested in besides cooking is the magic lantern, for which he has thousands of slides, including those which give photos of all the most interesting places in the world. I presented him with a cinematograph, first giving, on two successive nights, an exhibition in one of the durbar rooms in Arak. The cinematograph was installed in an ante-room, the audience, with the Amir, being in the large durbar room with a wetted screen placed in the doorway communicating between them on which to project the pictures. The first evening, when everything was ready, the Amir was informed and came into the room where I had the apparatus fixed, and asked me to show him the working of it. I did so, and he then retired to the larger room to witness the performance; but before allowing the entertainment to proceed he charged an entrance fee to all who were allowed to come into the room of ten rupees each for those provided with seats and five rupees for those who had to stand. When I heard this I thought it probable that I should be given a share of it as a reward for giving the entertainment; but he kept it all, and it rather typifies the character given him by his people.

CHAPTER IX

PRISONS AND PRISONERS

Kotwal and Kotwali (magistrate and police court)—Policemen as thieves —Description of prisons—Description of how prisoners are treated and their irons—The old well in Bala Hisar—The spy system — Cutting a man's throat — False reporting — Fanah (wedge) tortures.

THE position of Kotwal (city magistrate) has from time immemorial been an office of high standing in the East. In some countries, the Kotwal has the power of ordering death, but in Afghanistan only the Amir can punish by the extreme penalty. One of the duties of the Kotwal, however, is to see that all executions, public and private, are carried out, also to conduct those tortures which are inflicted to make men confess their crimes, or the names of their confederates, and to see that all punishments for offences committed are properly administered. In addition he has to look after all city arrangements, to superintend the police, to try all cases brought before him, either criminal or civil, to receive the reports of and supervise the street kalanturs (headmen), and keep a record of births and deaths.

Prisons and Prisoners

The Kabul Kotwali office is built alongside the dome of the Arak bazar, the newest bazar in the city, which is close to the Arak palace, and where the best goods in Kabul are to be obtained. There are, besides the chief Kotwali office, several Kotwali (police) stations in the different streets in Kabul, and other police stations, which are principally for the purpose of stopping runaways, and to collect the custom duties on all goods entering the country, are placed along all the chief roads right up to the borders of neighbouring states, and in this way the police are able to keep a check on all persons leaving or entering the country. In Kabul itself all custom duties are collected by a special department appointed for that purpose. In each police station is a guard of seven Kotwali sepoys (policemen), including the havildar or sergeant, who is supposed to be a man who can write but very often cannot, and so has a friend or relation among the men with him who writes all reports. There are other officers higher in rank than the havildar, and all of them, officers and sepoys (police), follow the usual custom of the country in taking advantage of their position, in order to abstract money or goods from all the people they are brought into official contact with, and to invent excuses to do so in other cases. It is a common occurrence for a person caught in the act of committing an offence against the law to bribe the Kotwali sepoys to let him go free, and any of the sepoys will do this, provided there are no witnesses

who can give information to a higher officer and so make trouble.

The policemen are themselves the greatest thieves in Kabul, and take anything they can get, great or small; but they become most indignant when they see others stealing, considering it, perhaps, an encroachment on their privileges. In going along the bazar a policeman will take a handful of grain or fruit from a shop as he passes and eat it, and the shopkeeper must say nothing. If a shopkeeper should make a fuss over anything a policeman does in that way, it is more than probable that a case will be trumped up against him very shortly afterwards, and if there is nothing else to accuse him of, he is accused of giving short weight, and as there are few correctly made sets of metal weights in Kabul, those there are being made and used in the Government workshops and stores, the shopkeepers have to take stones of different sizes, and after matching them against the Government weights use them for weighing out the articles they deal in. These stones are therefore readily changed by the policeman for others lying on the street, when taking a shopkeeper through the bazars to the Kotwal for trial, and when such convincing evidence is forthcoming, the shopkeeper is of course heavily fined, and for the future treats a Kotwali sepoy with every respect. In most of the robberies committed in Kabul, some of the Kotwali sepoys are concerned, their duties as policemen enabling them to mark the

most likely shop or house, and also to obtain correct information of the movements of the people in them.

The Kotwali guards at the different stations are supposed to be changed every two weeks; but when on guard at those places which give little work for them, or where they can more readily add to their income, they endeavour to be kept on there, and those who possess the favour of the Kotwal, manage to do this at times. These sepoys are the men employed by the Kotwal in the carrying out of executions and punishments, and those who happen to be on guard at the time are appointed for the work. Some of the younger sepoys are very sick after assisting in some horrible punishment, but use hardens them, and after a time they become callous to suffering in others, in some cases even to the extent of gloating over the death or tortures they are ordered to inflict on some miserable wretch.

Outside the city are also soldier guards from various regiments, but these are mostly posted about Arak and the new part of the city. Both these guards and the Kotwali guards have, in the present Amir's time, been much increased, so that in some places one is challenged every hundred yards or so at night. Kotwali stations have also been lately placed on all roads about four miles out of the city to prevent any one leaving without a road pass, so that no one can now travel even five or six miles out into the country without permission. At times, on distant stations, the Kotwali sepoy on guard is attacked

and killed at night for the sake of his rifle, and the body of one of them who was killed at Baber (which is only two miles south of the city), was hacked to pieces, possibly because he made a good fight for his life and injured some of his assailants.

The prisons in Kabul are not buildings erected for that purpose, but any house belonging to the Government which is suitably situated is used as a prison, and continues in such use. Strong bars are fixed across the windows to prevent the escape of those who are confined there, and the outer door is made strong and padlocked, and has a guard of Kotwali sepoys stationed inside it. The space at disposal in such houses is very inadequate to the number of prisoners; but that is not regarded at all by the authorities, who would laugh at the idea of properly housing such animals as prisoners, nor do they insist on the prisons being kept clean, or in any way healthy. There is absolutely no thought of sanitation, and the prisoners are herded together in a house that has perhaps been used as a prison for twenty or thirty years, and never cleaned. Consequently, typhus and other diseases are common among prisoners, and typhus alone will very often sweep off seventy to eighty per cent. of the men confined there, and the wonder is that all do not die.

A man who was in prison for some years described it to me. He and his father and some other relations were chained together, and so brought from a

distance to Kabul, charged with some political offence, and put in prison there. It is very seldom that prisoners charged with such offences are tried at once, if at all, so they lay in prison for some years, and had no hope of ever getting out, for their relations and friends feared to bring the matter to the notice of the Amir in case they should themselves incur his displeasure. The room they were confined in was a small one, and they, with the other prisoners, were about thirty in number, and, when lying down at night, there was only sufficient space for them to lie in rows, side by side. Sanitary arrangements there were none, and at length typhus broke out, and one after another succumbed to it, his father and some of his brothers and cousins being carried out for burial among others. He himself was ill with the fever for weeks, but recovered, and when the disease at last stopped, there were only five of them left out of the original number. Other prisoners were, however, brought in, and the room was packed again very shortly, and some of these got the fever from time to time and died.

At that time also, a number of prisoners were being secretly disposed of, and almost every night a man would be called from their number, and going away with his jailers, was never heard of again. This made the rest of them live in terror, for no man knew but what his turn might come the next night. Eventually the strain was too much for them, and they determined on revolt and escape, as death in

trying to escape was no worse than sitting and waiting for it to come to them. So one night, about three o'clock, when the guard was known to be lax and most of the soldiers asleep, they got out of the room and made their way to the gate. Here the man on guard saw them and fired, dropping one man, but before he could reload, a huge Afghan who led the prisoners, took him across his knee and broke his back, and then seized the rifle and bayonet. The rest of the guard were roused by the noise, and a short fight ensued, and several of the guard being killed, the others fled; but some of the prisoners also suffered during the struggle. The door of the prison was now unguarded, and the prisoners escaped, but the guards who had run away had warned others, and they had not gone far along the streets before these were upon them, both in front and behind, and after a struggle they were overpowered and taken back to the prison. For this several were hanged, the big Afghan among them, and the rest had such heavy chains put on them that they could hardly move. It was not until several years had elapsed that the man who told me the foregoing was released; but eventually his friends brought his case to the notice of the Amir, and as there was no proof against him, and the governor who had imprisoned him had been hanged, he was released, but his health was shattered, and he died a few years later.

The food given by Government to the prisoners is bread, two nans (flat loaves weighing about half a

pound each) being given daily, one in the morning and one at night. This is far from sufficient, and if a prisoner has no friends or relations to send him either food or money, he is in a bad way. Towards each other, however, the prisoners, and all the poor people generally, are very good, and a man who has food to eat, however little, will offer some of it to another who has none. Prisoners have leg-irons fastened round their ankles to hamper their movements and render any attempt at escape more difficult, but the hands, except in case of a man being taken to execution or as a special punishment, are free. In all cases prisoners are treated by their guards with great severity, and the prisoner who does not do at once as he is ordered, gets the butt-end of a rifle in the small of his back as a reminder. From what I have seen I should imagine that a street dog's life is a happy one compared to theirs.

Of all the prisons, the worst and most dreaded is the old well in Bala Hisar. This is an old well which has been excavated through rock, with the bottom part widened out to some fifteen or twenty feet in diameter, and having over the mouth of the well a hut, in which a guard of sepoys is kept. In this underground hole men are imprisoned for life for very heinous offences (in the eyes of the authorities), and live and die there, the bodies of the dead being left where they lie together with the living. There are no sanitary arrangements of course, for none but prisoners are lowered down, and those who

are put down stop there. Food (bread and water) is lowered by a rope once a day to those below, but there are few whose minds or health do not give way in a short time, and most of the men imprisoned very soon end their days by dashing themselves against the rock, until they become unconscious and die, for the solitude and horror of it all drives them mad. The bottom of the well is dark, and the only light which penetrates is from the mouth above, and no sound from the outer world can reach those imprisoned there, while the stench and foulness of the atmosphere is horrible, and is itself sufficient to cause death. There is a man, however, who is said to have been there for fifteen years or more, but he is quite mad, and unconscious of his surroundings. When the Amir died, the present ruler gave orders that those in the well should be taken out, and brought before him. There were three who were alive, and their appearance was not prepossessing, for their faces had a dead, white look, and their eyes seemed to be blind in the daylight, while their hair and beards were long and matted, and the hair falling over their faces gave them a wild, animal look, which their finger-nails increased, for they were long and more like talons. The Amir ordered the men to be released, but some three weeks after again ordered them to be taken back to the well, the representations of others having convinced him that his father's action in so im-

[illegible] was just.

Prisons and Prisoners

When the late Amir came to the country from Russia, he brought with him an admiration of the Russian spy system, and incorporated it into his system of government. Consequently, every fourth man was a "reportchee" (spy), who sent in his private reports to the Amir. These spies were of all classes and ranks, and every large house had one or two spies among the servants who reported all they saw and heard, and as it is the custom of the country for servants to sit in the same room as their master, where they sit near the door to show their inferior position, and as they are allowed to express their opinion on any subject which their master and his friends may be discussing, they of course hear all that is said at any time, and should they be sent out of the room while their master speaks to any guest in private, then that itself would be unusual and suspicious enough to warrant reporting to the Amir. The Amir had spies in the houses of his sons, and among the women of their harems, and spies in his own harem too, while his wives and his sons in their turn, had their spies among his servants, who informed them of all that concerned themselves. It was an expensive system, and one of which the spies unscrupulously took advantage to make false reports against those they hated or feared, and have them put out of the way. Also for monetary considerations they would similarly dispose of another man's enemy.

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The offence which in the eyes of the late Amir was the most deadly and unforgivable was the writing by any one of reports concerning himself and his country to the Indian Government, and this was the favourite accusation of those of his spies who had an enemy to dispose of, and they showed a good deal of cunning in the preparation of the plot whereby their victim should be doomed, without chance of escaping the Amir's vengeance, and devoted to it much thought and time. Their schemes were usually outlined on the plan of following up their own report to the Amir, which gave details of how they became cognizant of the fact of the accused reporting to the English Government, and gave as proof the bogus letter or report alleged to have been found by them, by other reports, which they obtained by sending to their friends in India, and elsewhere, a draft of what they wanted written to the Amir, with instructions to copy it and send on to him a few weeks later. By these means they managed to get letters to the Amir from different places, each accusing their victim of being an English spy. And when one letter after another came, each one confirming the other, naturally the Amir was deceived, and it was not long before the accused was in prison, and there became lost, for his fate, though guessed at, was seldom known; the custom being to remove such men at night, either by poison, bayonet, or cutting the throat.

The method of cutting a man's throat is simple

but effective; two men hold the man's arms, and force his head back, while another, or two more if the man is a strong one, hold his legs. The officer in charge then slices with his sword backwards and forwards across the man's throat until the gash is considered deep enough, and then the man is thrown on the ground and left to kick, as a fowl does under similar circumstances, until death occurs. In some cases the head is severed from the body in the same way, when the Amir's orders are to that effect.

In other cases, when a man is ordered to be executed by having his throat cut, his grave is dug ready, and when the knife has done its work, he is thrown into it, and the earth is shovelled in at once, so that he is buried before death occurs.

False reporting, when found out, was a great crime in the eyes of the Amir, and such men were speedily punished with death. In some cases where a man has been wrongly killed, the old well was given the offenders to consider their crimes in. I was once in the Amir's durbar, when fifteen or sixteen prisoners and others were brought in. Those who were prisoners were accused of false reporting, and the other men were their accusers, and six or seven of the prisoners had been submitted to the torture of the "fanah," which is administered as follows:—A post, about six inches in diameter, is split into two pieces in the direction of its length,

and the two halves are put together again, and bound with rope for one half of the length, so that when finished it somewhat resembles a huge clothes-peg. The bound end of the post is firmly fixed in the ground, with the split part projecting above the surface, and the foot of the person to be tortured is tied to the upper end of it with thin cords, which pass round both the foot and the post, and a V-shaped wedge is inserted in the slit at the top. Then, when the wedge is hammered down, it makes the two halves of the post widen out, and puts a strong tension on the cord, which binds the foot and post together. When using this instrument of torture the wedge is tapped down until the cord exercises a slight pressure on the foot, and then the questions concerning the matter requiring confession are asked, and if the tortured one refuses to speak, the wedge is hammered down a little further, making the pressure of the cord still tighter on the foot, and so the wedge continues to be hammered down until the sufferer reveals all he knows (and sometimes much that he does not know, in order to save further torture), or until the toes are practically severed from the foot, when the other foot is similarly treated. There are many who have lost their toes through mortification setting in afterwards, under the torture of the "fanah," without confessing what they knew, and this speaks well for the endurance of the average Afghan, but the boast of the true Afghan is that he can endure pain, even to death, without a

sigh or sound, and some do so. Another form of torture is to cover the top of the head with dough, which is turned up at the edges to form a cup, and into the cup so formed, boiling oil is poured; the agony as the brain begins to bake may be imagined. There are other forms of torture also, but these cannot be described.

In this case the men who were brought before the Amir, after undergoing the "fanah" torture, were hardly able to stand, and their feet were swathed in bandages and rags, and one of them fell in a faint while the examination was on, but the Amir said he was shamming, and told the guards with them to make him stand up; so they struck him savagely with the butt ends of their rifles, and kicked him back to consciousness, but he looked ghastly ill, and swayed about as he stood. Eventually, after the hearing of much contradictory evidence, several were ordered to be hanged, and the others to be imprisoned, pending decision as to their punishment. One of the condemned men stopped as he was being led away, and cursed the Amir, wishing him every evil he could think of; but the guards struck him across the mouth several times, and dragged him out. The Amir looked at the man with his teeth showing in the savage grin he had when angered, but, after a few moments, smiled and turned to me, and spoke on other matters, apparently having dismissed all thought of what had taken place from his mind. But to sentence a few men to death, and

listen to their views on the matter as they were led away, was no new experience for the Amir. Many men cursed him as they were being executed, for one of the national traits of character is vindictiveness.

CHAPTER X

TORTURES AND METHODS OF EXECUTION

Amir's iron rule—Hanging by hair and skinning alive—Beating to death with sticks—Cutting men in pieces—Throwing down mountain-side—Starving to death in cages—Boiling woman to soup and man drinking it before execution—Punishment by exposure and starvation—Saffold scenes—Burying alive—Throwing into soap boilers—Cutting off hands—Blinding—Tying to bent trees and disrupting—Blowing from guns—Hanging, etc.

THE Amir once told me, when speaking of the unruly character of the people, and the difficulty of making them, by the example of others who were punished, become peaceful and law-abiding, that he had ordered over a hundred thousand to be executed since the beginning of his reign, and that there were still others who thought they could set his laws at defiance. The Amir ruled his people with an iron hand, and, considering their character, such is necessary, if order is to be maintained. I was one day in durbar at the Bagh-i-bala palace, and one of the soldiers committed some offence, and was ordered to be brought in by the Amir, who inquired into the circumstances, and then instructed one of his officers to take the man down the hill adjoining the palace, and cut his throat there. This was done, and two little slaves boys, who went with the executioners

to see the tamasha, came back with white faces and trembling limbs. It was the first time they had seen such a sight, but those who were attached to the Amir's court, were not long in his service before becoming used to happenings of this sort.

Although the Amir punished many small offences with death, he was not always enraged when one man killed another, unless the murdered person happened to be one whom he knew and liked, then his anger was ungovernable, and the murderer was generally ordered death in some particularly horrible manner. One of the slave boys, of whom the Amir was very fond, and had raised to a position of influence and power, and who consequently became arrogant and overbearing in manner to others, and so gained for himself a good many enemies, was shot by a soldier one evening while riding across the square in Sherpur cantonment. When the soldier was brought before the Amir, the latter, suspecting that he could have had no enmity against the slave boy, questioned him as to who instigated him to commit this deed, and the soldier refused to answer. This further enraged the Amir, and he gave orders that the man was to be tied to the bough of a tree by his hair in the palace garden, and so many square inches of skin taken off his body daily until he confessed.

The man died on the third day without confessing anything to incriminate another, but the name of one of the generals was mentioned freely

by the people as the instigator of the crime, in revenge for the slave boy insulting him in the Amir's presence shortly before.

Another case showing the severity of the Amir towards the relatives of those who escaped his vengeance was that of an old man brought before him, whose son had run away from the country. The old man's son, with two or three others, had been concerned in, or accused of, swindling the treasury, and knowing what was being said against them, and the fate in store should they be convicted, they determined on escaping to India. The Kotwal, however, got wind of their intention, and came on the night proposed for escape with some twenty of his men, and posted them outside the gate, where some horses belonging to those in the house were standing ready saddled. The son, and those with him, discovering that the Kotwal and his men were lying in wait for them, determined on cutting through them, so, suddenly opening the door, they rushed out armed with swords and revolvers. The Kotwal was not noted for personal courage, and the Kotwali sepoys generally are seldom courageous, perhaps through being of mixed races, and they gave way after one or two of their men had been cut down, and then the young fellows made a dash to the horses, and cutting down those who held them, mounted and got away, and were not heard of again. The father, who was left in the house, was seized by the Kotwal and taken to

the Amir, where, not knowing whether his son had escaped or not, he begged the Amir to forgive him, urging that he was guiltless of the crime of which others had accused him, and offered his own life if his son's might be spared, saying the Amir might kill him himself where he stood. The Amir, enraged at the young men escaping his vengeance, seized his stick and struck the old man down with it, and then ordered others there to go on beating him; and in the Amir's presence the old man was thrashed until he was dead, and his body was afterwards exhibited on a charpai (bedstead) in the bazar for two days, as a warning to others. The Amir invariably punished the nearest relatives of those who ran away to escape punishment, and knowing this, many a man returned and gave himself up in order that his relatives might go free.

Beating with sticks is a common punishment, so many blows being given on the man's back as he lies spreadeagled on the ground, two soldiers, one on either side, administering the blows, while others hold the man down, and sometimes the Amir orders the blows of such a number that the man shall die under the punishment. A master carpenter, who did not get on with the work ordered in a new part of the palace, was given a hundred and fifty blows with sticks, and died the day after, but the sticks used are at times so heavy that the bones of the back are broken and the flesh mortifies, so that a less number of blows will sometimes cause death.

Tortures and Methods of Execution

The present Amir had fifteen Kotwali sepoys beaten for neglect of duty, in not reporting the transgressions of their superior officer, until eight of them died under the blows, and the others were unable to move for weeks after, and being kept in prison received no medical treatment to alleviate their sufferings. On a later occasion, when one of his attendants had committed some mischief, with the object of getting the blame put on another fellow-servant, and was detected, the Amir, who was at the time on the temporary roof covering the new palace in the Arak garden, had the man brought before him, and there beaten with sticks until partly insensible, then the man was hauled to the edge of the roof and thence thrown to the ground, after which he was dragged by a rope fastened to his legs from where he lay to the Kotwali, but life was extinct on arrival, though he was still living after being thrown from the roof.

The present Amir is very scrupulous about all things surrounding him being kept clean and tidy, not only in the house and garden, but the roads leading to the palace must be kept swept and clean too. He was one day passing out of one of the smaller gates in the wall of the Arak garden, and noticed that the ground round the gateway was unswept; so, stopping there, he sent for the man whose duty it was to sweep the place. A woman came in reply, and said that she was the man's wife, and her husband was too ill with fever to get up, and

she had been so busy attending him that she had found no time to sweep the place herself, and also she was, as he could see, heavy with child. The Amir replied that he would relieve her of her burden, and ordered the woman fifty strokes with sticks on the abdomen. The woman was accordingly laid on her back, on the ground, and beaten, and died almost immediately afterwards.

The late Amir was very savage in punishing those who falsely reported his death. When the cholera epidemic broke out in 1900, the Amir went to live at Paghman, which is situated at the foot of the Hindu Kush, while the epidemic was raging, for the Amir and all his family greatly fear cholera, and run away at once from the affected area. Towards the close of the epidemic, two men came in to Kabul from Paghman, and gave out in the bazars that the Amir was dead of the disease; and when the Amir returned to the city a few days after, he had these men caught and brought before him, and said the wish was certainly father to the report which they had spread; so he ordered them to be cut in pieces, and their remains to be exhibited in the bazars as a warning to others. On another occasion when he had again been reported dead, he ordered the man who spread the report to be taken to the top of the Asman Heights, and there, on a part overlooking the river which is very precipitous, be put into a barrel and rolled down the mountain-side to the valley below. A similar case, but more brutally executed, was that

of an old man, a moullah, who had given out that the Amir was not a true Mussulman, and was ordered to be thrown down the mountain from the same point. When thrown over the cliff, by the Kotwali sepoys, his clothes caught on a jutting rock, which suspended him, and prevented further fall, and the sepoys, releasing the clothes, took the man back and threw him over again, this time successfully.

The Amir, after the style of the Mikado of dramatic fame, always tried to let the punishment fit the crime, although his punishments were sometimes such as to make one think that he greatly exaggerated the crime. For instance, a man who stole the food of some poor children, leaving them nothing, was put in a cage, in the bazar, and there starved; but to make the punishment fit his crime more closely, bread and water were brought to him two or three times each day, and placed just out of his reach, and this was continued until the man died of starvation.

In another case, a man and a woman, who loved not wisely but too well, both being married people, determined on running away together, hoping thereby to secure their future happiness in each other's society, but in their endeavour to reach India, where they intended living together, they were caught and brought back. The Amir, in ordering their punishment, said that, as the man was so fond of the woman, he should have her as completely as was possible. So the woman was thrown alive into a huge cauldron of boiling water, and boiled down to soup, and a basin

of this soup was given to the man, who was forced to drink it, and after drinking it he was hanged. In this case the Amir's object was to punish, not only in this life, but in the next, for a cannibal cannot enjoy the delights of Paradise as depicted in the Koran.

Another man and woman, who were caught in the act of loving unwisely, were, by the order of the Amir, who appropriately said he would let them live together until death, put on top of the Asman Heights, tied back to back with ropes, and kept there until they died of exposure and starvation, and sepoys were put on guard to see that no one interfered with the fulfilment of the punishment. The woman died first, and the man was allowed a day longer to die in, but as he lingered he was helped on his journey.

In ordinary cases, when a man and woman are caught, as in the last instance, both are ordered to be taken to the scaffold, and there the rope is adjusted round the man's neck ready for him to be strung up, and he stands there while the woman is put in a sack, the mouth of which is tied, and the sepoys thrust their bayonets through it and the woman until no further cry being heard it is known that death has occurred; then the man, who has witnessed his mistress's death, is hauled up and hanged. In similar cases where the relatives of the ruling family are implicated, the man is imprisoned, and no one knows what becomes of him, except that he is never heard of again, and the

woman is blinded or has her nose cut off, or some similar disfiguring punishment is inflicted, and after the punishment she is allowed to die or get well as nature orders without being nursed; mostly they die, and it is said that those who were once fond of them, help them to death with a dose of poison, which is perhaps the kindest thing they could do.

It is a common matter for a man who has grave suspicion that his wife is unfaithful to cut off her nose; sometimes they bite it off, as a sign to all of her unfaithfulness, and to spoil her beauty. This is, of course, when the lover cannot be located, and there are no proofs obtainable of her wrong-doing.

In those cases where men were convicted of outraging girls or women, the Amir was very savage in his punishments. In one case three men, so convicted, were buried in the ground up to their chins, and left there until dead, after which the dogs were allowed to come and eat them, or as much as they could get of them. For the body to be eaten by dogs is regarded as worse than the punishment causing death, because it cuts off all hope of Paradise.

"To fit the crime," the Amir has in some cases where men are very much married, and are too fond of spending most of their time with their wives to the neglect of their Government duties, given camphor to the men as a punishment, camphor being known in the country to be antiphrodisiac.

As a means of putting a stop to the constant

robbing of Government money in the different factories, the late Amir had some men who were in charge of the soap shops and were convicted of swindling, thrown alive into the soap boiler (which is one of a large capacity) when in full blast, to make up the deficit by boiling them down into soap. The Amir also had men thrown into boiling oil on occasions; but this was as a punishment, and had nothing to do with the manner of the crime.

To punish stealing, one of the usual penalties ordered by the Amir, besides hanging, was to have the hand cut off. On the occasion of my first visit to Kabul in 1889, I was given tents in the garden adjoining the workshops to live in, it being summer time; and one day one of the workmen, who are always searched before being allowed to pass through the gate when work is over, was found to have a piece of leather the size of a man's hand concealed under his coat. The Amir ordered the man to be hanged in the factory as a warning to the others, but on representations being made to him by the Englishmen who were working in the shops, the Amir commuted the sentence to the man's hand being cut off. Hands are cut off by a butcher, and usually the stumps, when the hands are off, are plunged into boiling oil to stop the hemorrhage. This workman died a couple of days afterwards.

Another common punishment is that of blinding people. This is the usual punishment of those who

try to escape from prison or from the country—synonymous terms almost. The manner of doing this is to lance the pupils of the eyes, and then put in a drop of nitric acid, and, to guarantee no sight being left, quicklime is afterwards added. The agony endured must be frightful, and in one case when fifteen men were blinded together in Sherpur cantonment, where these punishments are usually carried out, the men were seen on the third day after being blinded all chained one to the other, and sitting in a row on the ground; they were unable to go elsewhere to obey the calls of nature, and consequently were filthy beyond description. Three of them were lying dead still chained to the living, and some of the living, too, were lying unconscious, while the others were moaning and rocking themselves backwards and forwards.

Running away was not always punished with blinding, as was exemplified in the case of five Kafri boys. These boys, who were part of the regiment formed of the prisoners brought from Kafristan after that country was taken by the Amir, tried to get away to India, for Kabul and enforced Mohammedanism were little liked by them; but they were caught while doing so and brought back. As a punishment the Amir ordered the Kafri regiment to be paraded and the boys bayoneted in front of their fellows. There had been a good deal of dissatisfaction among the Kafris, and the Amir probably deemed a severe example necessary.

One form of execution, but which is very rarely used, is to bend the tops of two young trees towards each other and fasten them to the ground. The person to be executed is tied, one leg and arm to one tree, and the other leg and arm to the other tree, and, when all is ready, the ropes binding the trees down are cut simultaneously, and the body of the person tied to them is disrupted.

There are three common methods of execution in use—blowing from guns, hanging, and bayoneting.

The latter is mostly done in the prisons at night, when those to be executed are taken by guards to some secluded spot, such as the rased portion of Bala Hisar, and there bayoneted, their bodies being afterwards thrown into an old well or ditch close by, and earth thrown over them.

When a person is ordered to be blown from a gun, he is taken to the one which is fired daily to announce the hour of midday, and is fixed on a small hill close to the Sherpur cantonment. He is there tied to the gun in such a manner that his back is against the muzzle, and on the explosion of the charge the greater part of his body is blown into pieces. Blowing from guns is a punishment intended to strike terror into the hearts of others, but it is no doubt a preferable death to other forms of execution, inasmuch as it is sudden. Men who rob or swindle Government funds are served this way, and the Amin-Nizam, or paymaster to the army, is sometimes the central figure on these occasions, also

highway robbers and spies frequently end their days by being scattered from the gun.

For hanging the ordinary gallows is used, *i.e.* there is no drop given to break the neck, the man being hauled up by means of a pulley and hanged till he dies of strangulation. Two gallows are used, one T shaped, and very high, is for a man who is hanged and left hanging until the following day; the body being left on the gallows as a warning to others. The other is a frame similar to the frame of a table with the top planking removed, the legs being fixed in the ground, and each side of the square so formed, has three or four wooden pulleys depending from it, over which the ropes pass for hauling the body up. It sometimes happens that several have to be executed at one time and this gallows was made large enough to take sixteen persons together. Those who are condemned to be hanged are not blindfolded at the time of execution; their arms are tied to the body by a rope which passes over the arms above the elbows, and their legs are secured above the ankles. While a man is being hanged, his forearms work up and down, one after the other, struggling to break the cords and get at the rope round his neck, until he becomes unconscious, and it is a rather gruesome sight to watch his fruitless struggles to relieve the agony of strangulation. On one occasion a burly Afghan who was being hanged managed to break the rope binding his arms, and then clutching the rope, above his neck, pulled himself up and let go again, probably with the

intention of ending the torture by breaking his neck; but the rope broke instead, and the man fell to the ground, and lay partly unconscious at the foot of the gallows for twenty minutes or so, while another rope was being brought from the bazar, and when that arrived, he was again strung up, and the execution completed. On another occasion when a man was being hanged the rope broke three times, and each time a new rope had to be brought from the bazar. When the third rope broke, those standing by said it was a sign from God that the man was innocent and should not be hanged, and the officer in charge of the execution despatched a messenger to the Amir with the particulars of the case, and asked if the man was to be reprieved; but the Amir's message came back that the man must be hanged as ordered, so they had no alternative but to pull the man up for the fourth time and hang him until he was dead.

The lesser punishments for offences committed, besides those already mentioned, vary according to the caprice or humour of the Amir. In some cases noses are cut off, beards are plucked out, men are made to stand for several days and nights without moving. Snuff is rubbed into the eyes, and in different other ways they are made to feel the Amir's displeasure. Any butcher who was convicted of giving short weight was, by Amir Shere Ali's orders, nailed by the ear to the door of his shop.

In one case, where false witnesses were produced before the Amir, and were detected, the emissaries of

the man who engaged these witnesses at a certain price each to give false evidence were ordered to be hanged by the heels in the Arak bazar from sunrise to sunset for eight days; but the men had friends, and the power of money is great, so the police sepoys allowed them to rest with their chests on the ground and legs up in the air until some officer was seen approaching, when they were hauled clear of the ground until he had passed, and were then lowered again, but even with all this indulgence, the men fainted several times. The strange part of the sentence lay in the punishment of the man who wanted, and paid for, the false witnesses, for he was fined only. No man knows the mind of the Amir, they say in Kabul, and it would be interesting to know by what process of reasoning the chief offender was considered less guilty than those who did his bidding.

Another punishment, which was also a huge joke in the court for many months, was that of a slave boy who had asked the Amir several times to give him a wife, until at last the Amir said, "Yes." It was a usual thing for the Amir to give a slave girl from his harem for a favourite slave boy to marry. The marriage of this boy was celebrated in the usual way; a large khirgah or bamboo tent was fixed in the palace garden for the use of the newly married couple on the night of the ceremony, and all passed off with the firing of guns and feasting, as is usual. When at last the bridegroom hurried to the tent to see his bride for the first time face to face

(the bride is never seen by the bridegroom until after the marriage ceremony is over), he found the tent in darkness, but passed in. Shortly afterwards he rushed out yelling, and fled to the Amir's presence, saying that a great calamity had befallen him, and that it was a shaitan and not a woman he had married. It transpired that the Amir, to punish the boy's importunity, had secretly ordered another of his slave boys to be dressed up and put in the place of a girl during the ceremony.

CHAPTER XI

LIFE OF EUROPEANS IN KABUL

Life in Kabul—Houses and gardens—Guards and danger from "Ghazis" —Allowances given wives—Servants and swindling.

I HAVE often been asked, "But didn't you find it lonely in Kabul"? and in giving an affirmative answer, the memory of the many weary hours spent alone after worktime is always brought back to me. In the loneliness of life in Kabul lies its worst feature, and the effect on one of living such a life for several years is far from beneficial, but the extent of the ill effect produced is not properly estimated until one returns to civilization. There is no social intercourse between the Afghans and Europeans, the utmost in this way being a ceremonious call, on some feastday, by those who are well disposed towards the English, and this is generally a compliment for which a substantial return is expected by those who pay it.

The loneliness is worse in the winter than in the summer, for then the days are short, and the evenings from four o'clock until bedtime seem interminable, and it gets worse as the winter progresses, for there is little to make time pass but read, and

one gets tired of that when there is nothing else to do for several hours each day, and especially so when there is seldom a new book to read. I used to welcome work which necessitated the preparation of plans and drawings, because I could do these after nightfall and make the time pass more quickly; and when all else failed as a means of amusement, I got one of the clocks and took it to pieces and cleaned it, and otherwise damaged it. Another work I left for the evening was the analysis of ores which were sent from all parts of the country to the Amir, who passed them on to me, and I was glad of them as a means of making time pass. Altogether it is very different to what it is in India or England, where the evenings may be passed pleasantly in so many ways.

In Kabul there is no amusement that one does not make for one's self, and there is not much to make amusement out of, unless one cares to make a joke of tragedies. On Fridays and holidays the day may be spent in shooting, for most of the summer months quail and blue pigeon can be got in the fields outside the city, and in the winter there are plenty of duck and snipe to be found on the chamans. The chamans are flat stretches of ground in the valleys, which are partly covered with water, where grass and weed abound for water-fowl. The birds, though, are very much hunted, and are consequently very wild; but they afford the better sport on that account, as being much more difficult to shoot. The late Mr. Fleischer, who was in Kabul during the last three

years I spent there (he was murdered by the officer of his Afghan escort on his way to India in November, 1904), used to join me on Fridays, and we made a practice of spending the day on the chamans. We used to take eight or ten sepoys with us, as a guard is always necessary, and the men were useful for putting up the game, and we also had lunch brought out to us with kettles and other things necessary to make tea, so that we could picnic on the shooting-ground comfortably, and although we seldom got a decent "bag," the sport was a welcome variation to the daily routine of life. In the springtime, when the duck and snipe shooting was over, and the quail had not come in, we fixed up running targets for rifle practice. The target consisted of a life-sized representation of leopard or deer, roughly daubed on paper, which was nailed to an upright frame fixed on a light trolly. A man using a long rope dragged this trolly over a short length of narrow-gauge rail, while running at full speed, and in front of the trolly run we made a fence of young trees, so that the target could be seen at intervals only. This made very good practice at eighty to a hundred yards for snap shooting. When tired of rifle practice, we used to take the native circular net and go fishing up the river. The fish obtainable in the river near Kabul are few and small, and one must go up the river for some miles if decent sized ones are wanted, so that we seldom got fish more than three inches in length, but although those we netted were

small, they were of a good flavour and resembled whitebait when cooked. The larger the fish were the less flavour they had.

In the early part of my stay in Kabul I used to go for long rides about the country, generally unattended, for those were the days when Amir Abdur Rahman was full of vigour, and it was deemed unwise to meddle with one of his "Feringhees." I found, however, that I got enough riding in the ordinary course of my work, so after a time, I gave it up. Then I got a bicycle, and used to ride about the country around on that; but this, too, eventually became uninteresting when there was nothing fresh to see and the rides had no objective, and the day's work also was sufficient to keep me in good health so far as exercise went. I afterwards spent most of my time during the evening in the garden, except when there was quail shooting to be had in the fields close by, and I also found that for two hours before sunset numbers of blue pigeon used to fly over the garden in twos and threes, returning to their sleeping place from the fields and mountains, where they had been out feeding all day, and as this offered good amusement within easy reach, I spent most of the evenings, when I had nothing better to do, sitting in the garden waiting until one or another came within range. They afforded good practice, for blue pigeon fly fast, and, coming from in front and flying over one's head, they were more difficult to hit than birds

flying past on one side or the other. We also made a tennis court, and during the last two years were able to play most days until winter set in. One can play tennis in Kabul until nearly the end of December, when the snow begins to fall and stops further play until the following April.

The house I had was one with six rooms below and six above. All the windows faced an inner courtyard, round the other sides of which ran the kitchen and servants' quarters, stables, hamam, etc.; I had windows made on the outer side of the house also, so that I could not only get a view of the garden, but make the back rooms light enough to live in. The house was originally the harem serai in which some of Amir Shere Ali's wives lived, and it is the custom in building houses intended for the use of women to leave the outer walls without windows to ensure greater privacy. The windows are therefore always on the side which faces the inner courtyard. For the same reason the roofs of the houses, which are flat and are used by the women to enjoy the air in the evening, have a high wall round them so that they may not be seen by other men.

We all had gardens attached to the houses given us, and mine was a large one; the house, too, was a large one, and was situated on the outskirts of the city near Deh Afghanan, where there is land in plenty. I took a good deal of interest in the garden, and grew all sorts of vegetables: potatoes,

cabbage, cauliflower, cucumbers, melons, celery, asparagus, tomatoes, peas, beans, and other vegetables; all did well in it. I also grew strawberries, of which fine crops of large fruit were yielded. But I got little or no fruit from the trees in the garden, for the seven Kotwali sepoys who formed the guard on the outer gate of the house most of the time I was there, took care to make away with all fruit as it ripened, and as they did so at night or while I was away on my work I was unable to fasten the guilt on them, for although I cared little who had the fruit I was annoyed at it being stolen.

On one occasion I saw a single apple left in the thickest part of the foliage of one of the trees, and I sarcastically told the sepoys with me that I looked upon that apple as my share of the fruit, but I would leave it on the tree for a few more days until it ripened, and I asked them to see that it was left untouched. They said, "Ba chashim" (on my eyes be it); but the next day it was gone, and although all denied having touched it, no one but themselves had access to the garden. I mention this to show that the Kotwali sepoys cannot leave untouched anything they can put their hands on, provided there is a probability of the thief remaining undetected. On another occasion they stole the bridle of my horse, and as this was serious, for I had but one, I summoned the guard with their havildar (sergeant), and told them of the

theft, but said I would wait until the morning, and if it was not found by that time I should report the matter to the Amir. Early the following morning one of the sepoys found the bridle lying in some long grass in the garden, and, as proof, showed me the spot where he had found it. I said that I had long suspected that there was a shaitan (spirit or devil) about the house who was in the habit of mislaying articles belonging to me, and it was fortunate that I knew it, for otherwise I might think that the sepoys stole the things, and bring "budnami" (ill reputation) on them. They looked at me undecided whether I spoke sarcastically or meant it, but it was a long time before anything else was stolen from the house.

The Kotwali guard with me gave a good deal of trouble through their thieving propensities. When I tried to fix the theft on them, for they never let themselves be caught red-handed, they would in turn accuse one or other of my servants, and by all combining their evidence, would show that one had seen the servant do it, and another one would bring the man he had sold the stolen article to, and so on, until they made up a strong case. That the servants stole things if left to themselves I knew, but I had made a rule that each man was responsible for the articles in his charge, and had to make good anything lost, and this I enforced, so that a servant would not be likely to steal and sell that for which he had to pay double the amount he could sell it for. About this time,

when I was endeavouring to stop the thefts which just then were very frequent, a particularly bad lot of sepoys being on guard at the time, the Kotwal was evidently informed of my endeavours, for one of my servants was taken to prison accused of stealing two teapots from a tea-seller in the public garden close by, and some of the Kotwali sepoys with me gave evidence that they saw him sell the teapots to a shopkeeper in the bazar, and brought forward the shopkeeper and the teapots as evidence. The matter being taken before the Amir, the servant was ordered to be put in prison, and the Amir wrote to me to be careful what sort of men I got for servants, because, if a man was a thief, he might on occasion become a murderer, and it was dangerous for me to have such men about me. Having thus, as the Kotwal intended, prejudiced the Amir's mind against my servants, any complaint I was likely to make of his sepoys' stealing would not be listened to, when they would all swear that one of my own servants was guilty. Concerning the theft of teapots just mentioned, I knew the servant to be guiltless, for both before the time of the supposed theft he happened to be with me for some hours, and after that until late at night, helping me while I made a bookshelf. Eventually I got the man released from prison, but he would not come back to my service, fearing, he said, the enmity of the sepoys. However, they followed their vindictive custom of not letting a man alone whom they had once accused, and got him back

in prison some short time after, where, like many another, he disappeared.

The guards of sepoys given to the European servants of the Government are called guards of honour, but they have also to report all that the European does, where he goes, who visits his house, or his servants, and all pertaining to him. This is principally to find out if he is a spy, and sending reports to the Indian Government, but it also enables the Amir to find out what manner of man he is. The guard is a necessary one, to prevent Europeans being attacked by fanatics, or ghazis, as they are called, of whom there are plenty about, and from whom there is now more danger of attack than when the late Amir was in his prime.

These fanatics care little, provided they kill a Feringhee, whether they themselves are killed the next moment or not, for they are then sure of Paradise, and the houri, and the rivers of milk, etc. I was attacked by one of them one afternoon in the workshops, while I was squatting on my heels, directing some masons below me, who were putting in the foundations of a furnace. The ghazi came behind with an empty 9-pounder iron shell in each hand, and threw one at me with all his force from close behind; he aimed at my head, but fortunately I stood up at the moment he threw the shell, and received it between the shoulders instead of on the head, and the edge of the shell struck me about half an inch from the spine. The force of the blow took

all power from my body for a time, but the sepoy with me—there was but one of the guards with me that day, strangely enough—seized the man before he could throw the second shell, and pinioning his arms, got him on the ground, while the workmen gathered as if by magic, and kicked and beat the ghazi so roughly that he was soon in a semi-conscious condition. I afterwards sent for the captain of the regiment on guard in the workshops, and had the man made prisoner, and put in the guard-room there, pending the Amir's orders. He was punished by being kept for six months with his hands chained together with a stick between, so that they should remain about twelve inches apart, and the punishment included being kept in prison for life. To try and kill a Feringhee is not a very great crime among Mussulmans, and the man's friends very nearly succeeded in getting the sentence annulled a year or so later, but I used the influence I had, and their efforts were not successful. For some days after being attacked I was unable to move about much, and paralysis was feared, for the spine was injured a little; but Mrs. Daly, the lady doctor, attended me with so much care and skill that I was soon going about as usual, though for a year or two the place was tender. The Amir sent his own hakeem (doctor), with many expressions of sympathy, to examine my hurt. He came for three days to inquire how I progressed, and then rejoined the Amir at Paghman, where he had moved his court, to escape the cholera,

which broke out the day I was injured. There were other attempts, but none where I escaped so narrowly, and these happened in the last three years of my stay in Kabul, that is, when the late Amir was feeble, and during the reign of the present Amir, who is not yet a prophet in his own country.

One attempt, which illustrates the narrow-minded jealousy of the Kabuli, was in the powder-shop, where I went in accordance with instructions from the Amir to put matters in order, the Amir saying that the powder made in Kabul fouled the bore of the guns much more than foreign powders did. The man in charge of the powder-shop was a member of the royal family, which is a large one in numbers, and he resented my appointment over his head to the extent of putting flints with the powder in the incorporating mills and starting them as soon as I entered the shop they were in. There is always a possibility of powder exploding while incorporation is going on, and, seeing that he and all the others with him remained outside and left me to go alone into the shop, I suspected that all was not right, so, going out, I gave orders for the mills to be stopped, and then I found out the reason I was allowed to inspect them alone. I said nothing of this to the authorities, as my report which showed that the quantities of the ingredients were so arranged as to prove a source of revenue to those in charge, would, I knew, be sufficient for all purposes.

Europeans are allowed to take their wives to Kabul, and the wives are generously given a living

allowance by the Amir; but Kabul is no place for a woman to live in, for there are no amusements, and there is practically no society for her, and few women can live happily who see no one but their husbands from one month to another; consequently women are forced back on themselves, and get into a low condition of health, which soon brings out all the ailments they are subject to. For children the climate is a good one, and they thrive well. The Afghans are fond of children, and as they believe that all of them, no matter of what race, are Mussulmans until they arrive at the age of reason, European children are well looked after wherever they go, and are admired to the extent of a large crowd following them about the roads and public gardens when they take their daily outings. Toys are given them, and their every wish is a law, so that they are very much spoilt, and usually yell when they have to be taken from their guards and go into the house to their father and mother. The change from despot to subject being one little to their liking.

European women servants are not desirable in Kabul, for they require looking after too much, and are, besides, of little use except as companions for their mistresses. They are treated familiarly by the native servants and others they come in contact with, and form acquaintances which are not to their credit. Those who were brought to Kabul in the early part of my stay there by the wives of the English residents were mostly sent away in more or less disgrace, while

the German nurse, who was taken up there by Mrs. Fleischer, left her when her services, for which she was engaged, were immediately required, and went to the present Amir's harem and placed herself in the hands of his chief wife, saying that she wanted to become a Mussulman, and although Mr. Fleischer went to the Amir's palace late that night to get the woman to return, if only for a day, or until the trouble was passed, the Amir said he could not use force to make her do so, but she could return for a time if she wished, and this the woman refused to do. Consequently Mrs. Daly had her hands very full looking after Mrs. Fleischer and the baby all that night and the next day unattended by any nurse. The German nurse eventually got a husband, which was apparently the chief reason of her apostasy, although at first it seemed likely to be a difficult matter, for when the Amir called together his attendants and asked who would marry her, her face had unfortunately been seen by them, and none volunteered. In this we see one advantage of the Afghan marriage custom. The Amir at last bestowed her on a Kafri officer, whose pay he raised, and a house was given them to live in.

As there are no Christian churches or clergymen in Kabul, Mrs. Fleischer's baby was christened by her husband, Mrs. Daly and myself standing as sponsors, and the Amir, in a *firman*, giving the child its name. Any written order of the king is called a *firman*.

Under the Absolute Amir

The English who formerly lived in Kabul were not unfortunate in having their social status at home fixed. One lady, the wife of one of the English *employés*, on stating that her father was a minister, had the admission promptly translated by the native interpreter as "the daughter of the *Prime Minister*," and the other ladies had to keep up to this standard to prevent themselves being put down as nobodies; consequently it was a rather well-connected bevy who graced the Queen-Sultana's court on occasions.

The servants to be obtained in Kabul are unfit for anything but the commonest sort of housework, and know nothing of English cooking or waiting at table. I took a Hindustani cook and a khitmatgar (table-servant) up with me, and engaged Hazara coolies to carry water, sweep, and clean things, and to look after the horses. After several months' service these men got to know their work, but by the time they had done so and were becoming useful, they had invariably saved enough money to return to their own country and start as farmers in a small way. Some of the Hazaras I had from time to time who worked as cook's assistant, were soon able to cook several English dishes, and do it well, and, no doubt, if they could have been induced to stop long enough, they would have become good cooks. The Hazaras, however, are a truculent lot, and quarrels with the sepoys on guard were frequent. In consequence of this quarrelling there was a good deal of enmity generated, and several of my servants

disappeared, and I found out afterwards that they had been put in prison by the Kotwali sepoys on a charge of being spies, and supplying me with information, and while in prison were put out of the way by one or other of the methods of murder in common use there.

One Hindustani servant who was with me on the journey up to Kabul through Kandahar, some months later developed into a drunkard, drinking the raw spirit which is distilled in the Government shops and sold to Hindoos in the bazars, as well as being used in different manufactures. I put up with it for a long time, but when I found that matters got worse daily, and not only the work was not properly done in the house, but a good deal of swindling was going on, I wrote to some friends in India, and had another man sent up to replace him. I had kept back part of his pay for some time to prevent him wasting it in drink and women, as he was fond of doing, and had given orders to the sepoys on the gate to stop him going out at night to other Hindustanis' houses where cards were played, drink supplied, and loose women were kept; but all this failed to stop the man's misbehaviour, and when the other servant at last arrived I obtained a passport to enable him to return to India, and told him to arrange by which caravan he would travel, and to see me the day before he started, when I would give him the wages I had kept in hand. In the mean time he went to live with some friends, and two or three weeks passed before he

came to me one evening to say good-bye, and tell me that he was starting for India the next morning. I said good-bye to him, gave him his money and his road permit, and he went away. A short time after I found that he had not gone back to India, but had used the money to get married to a widow—a rather notorious character—and had been paying daily visits to my old enemy, the Kotwal, who tried to compromise me before the Amir through this man. He had told the Kotwal many lies to revenge himself on me; but as nothing he said could be proved, the Amir refused to listen, whereupon the Kotwal clapped the man in prison as the best means of preventing his tongue wagging about his own part in the matter of getting up a case against me, and some few weeks later had his throat cut at night, and the body disposed of. Of the sequel I knew nothing for some months, but eventually a man told me the particulars related to him by a Kotwali sepoy, of how this sepoy had been one of those appointed to cut the servant's throat late one night, and how the body had been stripped of its clothing, and then thrown into a ditch and covered with earth. He said the man's screams were fearful when he saw they had come to kill him, and, knowing his timid nature, I can believe it.

The Hindustani servants I had in Kabul all swindled more or less, and generally more toward the end of their service, when I was forced to dismiss them and get others. I had little time to attend to household affairs, except at night, and then I was,

as a rule, too tired to go into matters properly, and it is not at night that one can thoroughly see to such things, and I had perforce to accept their statements, such as the quantity of cattle and horse food bought and used, without knowing whether the animals had received all that was charged for, and being morally certain they had not; so the servants, seeing the position, took advantage of it, as natives ever will. Thrashing servants does little good, and it besides engenders in them a spirit of retaliation, which shows itself in small things, such as forgetting trivial household duties, while pretending to do their utmost to please the sahib, and though these offences are so trivial, yet when one has other worries which are irritating they loom large, and are very trying to bear. In retaliation of this sort the natives are past masters, and mention of the small duty forgotten sends them into apparent fits of abject contrition. Both the servant and one's self know it is all humbug, but there is nothing of malice aforethought to be proved, so the servant retires gracefully with, when far enough off, a smug smile, while his master stands and fumes at his impotence to punish without losing dignity. Those who do not know the native, and he seems to be much the same in all Eastern countries, may think that they would find means of counter-retaliation, but rather than let matters go so far as that, it is better to get rid of the servant and try a new man, and this has its drawback, for one who changes servants frequently

will soon find it difficult to get a good one, and in native servants there are many degrees of quality. The general experience of Englishmen in the East seems to be much the same, except that some fare worse with their servants than others, and if those who do not understand the native were present on some occasions, it is extremely probable they would think the master most unpleasantly unjust to poor servants, who were doing their best for him.

If one wants to buy cheaply from the bazar, it is better to send a native of the country to do the buying, rather than a Hindustani, for the latter, being known to be an Englishman's servant, is charged double the price asked from any one else. When a native of the country does the buying, he always adds something on to the price when rendering the account, and so does a Hindustani, but generally the amount of the commission he charges is less than the other one, and one also saves the extra price asked by a shopkeeper from the Hindustani servant. I have tried sending the latest engaged, and therefore the poorest, Hazara servant to the bazar to buy things, and in his innocence the man has charged me the prices asked by the shopkeeper, who thought he was dealing with a poor Hazara, and from the prices so obtained, I was able to keep some sort of a check on the other servants, and prevent their commission becoming too excessive. This dustoori, or commission on things bought, is recognized as quite the right thing by all servants

when buying for a foreigner, and the poor Hazara, who charged me no more than what he paid, used to have a bad time from the other servants when they found out that he had made nothing for himself; but a few months' service and advice from, and the example of, other servants always corrected such stupidity. However, I always found the Hazaras more reasonable in their dostoori, and therefore cheaper to send to the bazar than Hindustani servants, for the latter were always grasping to the last degree, and generally managed to kill the goose with the golden eggs by their avaricious tendencies, and it was a great blow to their pocket, to say nothing of their dignity, when I would take the purchase of requirements from their hands and appoint some poor servant to do the work instead, much to the latter's importance and swagger before the others.

CHAPTER XII

LIFE OF EUROPEANS IN KABUL—*continued*

Lawlessness—Food: raising cattle, sheep, fowls, etc.—Presents from princes and others—Famines in Kabul—Cholera—Moullah's pilgrimage and preaching—Use of roofs of houses—Work and working hours—Amusements—Hindu dealers and old curios—Festival visits to Amir and princes—Europeans tried by jury—Letters: cost of postage—Interpreters.

AFTER the death of Amir Abdur Rahman, a good deal of lawlessness prevailed in the bazars, which was principally due to soldiers interfering with most of the people they met, for the men of the army looked upon themselves, and not altogether without reason, as the cocks of the wall, since the Amir's death, and of course, did their best to show that they were not subject to any authority. I had, therefore, to send one of my guards with the servant, who went to the bazar daily to make purchases, to prevent the man being molested, and to ensure his returning with all the articles he had bought.

Shopkeepers also took advantage of the unsettled nature of affairs to give short weight, and in other ways increase their profits, no doubt thinking it best to make all they could before the disturbances, which all expected, set in. One shopkeeper took

half the matches from each box in the packets of twelve, and sold them in this half-filled condition, in order to reap a double profit. One of these packets being sold to one of my servants, and the fraud detected, the soldier who accompanied the servant knocked two of the shopkeeper's teeth out, whereupon the shopkeeper made complaint to the Kotwal, who reported the case to the soldier's commanding officer, and the affair ended in my being several rupees out of pocket in obtaining the soldier's acquittal. Bribery and corruption, of course; but I could not let the man suffer for his over-zealous protection of my interests. He was a simple Afghan soldier, and such men are usually very straightforward, and only think of carrying out the orders given them. I once sent a soldier of this description to tell one of the workshop foremen to come to my office, and on the foreman impudently sending back word to the effect that he was busy and would come later, I told the soldier to bring him by the beard if he did not come on being told to do so. The soldier went off, and presently returned dragging the man by the beard, the two together making sufficient noise on their progress to attract a crowd of workmen, who followed to see the end of the matter. Although I had not intended my instructions to be literally carried out, the effect on the rest of the workmen was that I had no occasion to send twice for another man.

In the bazars it is not an easy matter to get good meat, the sheep killed for the supply of meat

being generally the large Turkestani sort, the flesh of which is tough, and, being also rather flavourless, is poor eating. For this reason I bought my own, the small Hazara ones, which much resemble the Welsh sheep, and having got together a flock of fifty to sixty ewes, I sent them to Hazara, where pasturage is cheap and plentiful, and had others bred from them there. The young lambs were sent down to me from time to time in batches of eight or ten, to enable me to feed them up ready for killing, and in this way I got very good mutton, and each sheep killed cost less than a couple of shillings on an average, but I paid nothing for pasturage and no wages, the man in charge taking the sheep's milk, from which he made cheese, in lieu of pay. I also bred fowl, duck, geese, turkey, and guinea-fowl, and as food for them is cheap, they were inexpensive, and the fowl provided me with all the fresh eggs I wanted. I kept a couple of cows for milk, and the supply of occasional veal, when their calves grew up large enough to kill. The cows of the country seldom give a good supply of milk for long, so that I found it necessary to keep two to ensure a constant supply of milk sufficient for daily use, and for making butter. Flour used to be cheap, but the price for several years past has been going up steadily, so that it is now three times the price it was five years ago, and when I left Kabul, it was selling at six pounds per rupee (a little less than three half-pence per pound).

Tea, coffee, tinned provisions, tobacco, wines, etc.,

must be got up from India and usually it takes about three months from the time ordered before they are received. The reason it takes so long to get up provisions is due to the karaya-kash people (carriers for hire), first in the difficulty in persuading one of them to undertake to carry the goods from Peshawar to Kabul, and next in delaying the goods on the road for many weeks. It very frequently happens that a man carrying for hire gets a load in Peshawar for all his camels, horses, etc., part of the load being booked to Jelalabad, which is half way to Kabul, and the other part of the load to Kabul. On the man reaching Jelalabad he delivers the goods which are consigned there, and leaving there those goods which are to go further on, he returns to Peshawar for another load, and he continues going backwards and forwards until the goods for Kabul are sufficient for all his animals and then he goes on to that place. As the journey to Jelalabad from Peshawar takes five or six days, the various trips to and fro until the man is ready to go on to Kabul, take time, and if one happens to be out of tobacco, or anything else one wants, this prolonged waiting for fresh supplies is very irritating, particularly when one has been advised by letter from Peshawar that the goods left there some weeks before, but when the goods at last arrive one is so pleased in getting them, that all former irritation is forgotten. It often happens that goods are spoilt or go bad on the road on account of the boxes being left in the serais (caravan

yards) at different places exposed to the weather, but there is no remedy, and one has to take one's chance.

When the tribes about the Khyber Pass rose and necessitated the Tirah campaign, all traffic between Kabul and India was stopped, and we in Kabul had to go without those things which go to make life comfortable. There was nothing to drink, not even tea or coffee, and nothing to smoke, and so it continued for some months. I can go without most things when necessary, and not grieve overmuch, although I would rather necessity did not demand such abstinence, but when there is no tobacco or cigarettes, then matters seem to be in need of speedy readjustment, and I shall always remember the time when the Khyber Pass was closed. The Amir and the princes were always very good in letting me have things I wanted when I ran short, but on that occasion they ran short themselves.

The Amir and his sons were also very good in sending me occasional presents of game and fruit, the latter being sent them from other places before they were to be obtained in Kabul, and the strawberries they used to send me in the spring before the fruit in Kabul was ripe was a favour I very much appreciated. In the spring there was, as a rule, a scarcity of vegetables, the last year's supply being finished and the new year's not yet in, and I often had to go without potatoes for some weeks, and that is a dish I think most people would not care to be without at dinner; however, when I became accustomed to the

place I made arrangements which obviated going short in that respect.

During the famine of 1903, when so many thousands died of starvation, most of the bazar provisions were very scarce, and some things were not to be had at any price. Flour was unobtainable in the market, and I had to buy a supply of wheat for myself and the servants from the Government, and have it ground. The Government opened a depôt and sold a stipulated quantity every day to the people, as there was none to be had elsewhere, and it is the custom of the Government to keep full granaries in case of emergency. The struggles of the people to be first in getting to the depôt, in order to obtain a share of the wheat before the daily quantity allowed for sale was disposed of, were so great, and the crush so dense, that many, principally women, were killed, by being knocked off their feet and trampled to death. The distress among the poorer classes was particularly great. Parents, who had sold all there was in the house that could be sold to get money for food, had to watch their children crying of hunger, and daily getting weaker and thinner until at last they died, while they themselves, if they lived, did so only because they had more vitality and were stronger, and not because they ate food themselves and gave none to their children.

Most of the men under me in the workshops were starving, and sometimes a man would faint

while working, and on my asking what ailed him, I would gather that he had perhaps eaten about two ounces of bread in as many days. It was impossible to help all, but those of my workmen, whom I knew to be helpless with hunger, I gave food to once a day, and in many cases it was all they got until the next day. I saw one man hiding some of the bread I had given him under his coat, and the man, being run down to skin and bone for want of food, I was surprised at his not eating it all, but he told me that he had a child at home starving, and there was nothing in the house to sell for food. He said, also, that the mother of the child, and other women in the house, had nothing to eat, but that appeared to be a matter of little concern, and it was the condition of the child only that worried him. No one puts much value on a woman in Kabul, and it is not considered right for a man to cry for the death of a woman, even when it is his mother or sister who dies, but they cry and make enough fuss over the death of any male relative.

Another day a foreman workman came to me, and, without the usual salaams, told me he was a Mussulman, and had seldom asked a favour of his co-religionists, and never of a Feringhee; but he had three little children starving at home, and they were dying slowly, and his fellows would not give him anything, so he had determined to cut the throats of his children that night and put them

out of their suffering, and then kill himself, but while saying his midday prayers it had been put into his mind to go first to the Feringhee, and so he had come as soon as his prayers were finished. His manner of speech was not polite, and very much removed from that of others who begged for help from me, and who usually addressed me as "Presence;" but I knew the man to be one of the religious bigots who abound in the country, to whom an infidel is lower than an animal. However, I gave him three rupees without remark of any kind, and the man, without thanking me, but simply looking dully at the money, went away. Three rupees go a long way in Kabul, although they amount to less than half a crown. I thought no more of the matter until two days after, when the man came again, and, taking off his turban, prayed for me; this is the highest compliment and favour a Mussulman can pay an unbeliever. He then told me I had saved the life of his children. and his too, for he had been mad with grief and suffering when he first came, and he said further that he had been told much against Englishmen, but he would always pray now that one of them might become a Mussulman, and so go to heaven when he died.

On top of the famine that year came cholera, and the mortality was very high, for the people were weak with want of food, and their systems out of order through eating any rubbish they could

get to keep off the cravings of hunger. Daily the roads leading to the burial grounds streamed with people carrying their dead, and many, I knew, who came to tell me of a mutual acquaintance whom they had taken for burial that day, were themselves carried to the same place the next day, or a day later. The cholera spread among all classes, and penetrated even to the harems of the princes, Sirdar Nasrullah Khan's favourite wife dying of it, and among others the Amir's favourite slave boy was carried off. Several of the highest officials also got the disease, and died of it.

The members of the royal family are particularly afraid of cholera, that and earthquakes being their chief dread; and during other outbreaks the late Amir and his family, with all their officials and attendants, posted off helter-skelter from the city to Paghman the moment cholera made its appearance. When the cholera epidemic of 1900 occurred, three years before the one mentioned above, the late Amir and all his people went off at once, and the carts carrying luggage, tents, etc., people on horseback galloping, carriages driving along furiously, and the servants and soldiers on foot also hurrying on, gave to the scene all the appearance of a disorderly flight. The English (Mrs. Daly and myself were the only Europeans there at the time) were left behind to get on as best we could, and she spent the next four months in the treatment of cholera cases, whereby she saved many lives, while I occupied myself with a

series of experiments in smokeless powder-making, in which I was fortunately successful, chiefly because I was left all this time untroubled and alone.

When the 1903 outbreak occurred, the present Amir, following his father's example, sent off furniture, carpets, etc., to Paghman at once, intending to follow them himself the next day; but in the mean time the Governor of the city, hearing of his intention, went to him and frankly told him that if he left the city, the prevailing dissatisfaction was so great that the soldiers and people would rise, and he would never be able to return to it. So the Amir, who accepted the Governor's view of the situation, had to remain in his palace in Arak, and here he confined himself to two rooms, and allowed only some half-dozen favourite courtiers and attendants to see him, but he would not allow those who saw him to leave the palace, for fear of bringing the infection back with them. Sirdar Nasrullah Khan, who was, of course, obliged to remain in his city palace since the Amir did not go away into the country, spent most of his time on his prayer-carpet, so I was told by those who were with him; and when his favourite wife got cholera and died, he was described as being almost mad with grief at her loss and fear of the disease attacking him next.

The prince's fear, as also that of the Amir, had a reason, however, which intensified their usual dread of the disease, and it came about in this way. One of the chief and most influential of the moullahs

in the country started on the Haj (holy pilgrimage to Mecca) in the beginning of that year, and while going down through India, on his way to the sea-port where he intended embarking for Medina, he heard of a holy man who preached the second coming of Christ—one who said that he, like another St. John, had been sent on to prepare the way, and make Christ's coming known. The moullah went to see this man, of whom many and wonderful things were told by the natives about, and the words of the self-styled prophet were so convincing that the moullah was converted, and came to believe in the man being what he said he was. One day, it being known that the moullah was going on the Haj, the "prophet" took him into an inner room, and there, the moullah afterwards stated, the two together visited Mecca, and he saw himself one of the multitude of pilgrims at the holy shrine, and visited the inner court, and saw all there was to see, and said all the prayers prescribed in the different places before reaching the inner sanctuary. Whether mesmeric, or other influence, would account for this hallucination of the moullah is a matter for conjecture, but even death could not shake the moullah's belief that he had been to Mecca, and that his guide was a true prophet. The Mohammedans believe that the religion preached by various prophets (Moses, Christ, Mahommed) are the true religions for the time being, and that God inspires a new religion as it becomes necessary to the advanced needs of mankind, and that, therefore, the

Jewish religion was the true religion until Christ came, and the religion Christ preached was the true religion until Mohammed came. This new man, therefore, if his preaching was listened to, would upset Mohammedanism, and as he preached that Mussulmans must regard Christians as brothers, and not as infidels, this would render useless the Amir's chief weapon, Jihad (religious war), in case of English or Russian aggression. So the Amir, when he heard of all this, sent word to the moullah to return, and the moullah did so, preaching the new religion as he came, and as soon as he was well within the boundaries of the country, he was made prisoner and brought to Kabul. Here he was examined by the Amir, but the Amir could find in the moullah's clever replies nothing against the true religion which would make him an infidel, and therefore worthy of death, for a Mussulman, according to the Koran, who becomes an apostate, must be stoned to death. He was then sent for examination to Sirdar Nasrullah Khan, who is regarded as more than a moullah in knowledge of his religion, but the prince could not convict the man out of his own mouth, and so a jury of twelve of the most learned moullahs was convened, and even their examination of the accused could elicit nothing on which the man might be killed, and they reported this to the Amir. But the Amir said the man must be convicted, and so he was again sent to the moullahs, who were told that they must sign a paper, saying the man was an apostate and worthy

of death. Again the majority of the moullahs made affirmation that he was innocent of anything against their religion, but two of the moullahs, who were friends of Sirdar Nasrullah Khan, and had been talked over by him, gave their verdict for death, and on the finding of these two moullahs the man was condemned by the Amir and stoned to death. Before being led away from the Amir's presence to be killed, the moullah prophesied that a great calamity would overtake the country, and that both the Amir and the Sirdar would suffer. About nine o'clock at night the day the moullah was killed, a great storm of wind suddenly rose and raged with violence for half an hour, and then stopped as suddenly as it came. Such a wind at night was altogether unusual, so the people said that this was the passing of the soul of the moullah. Then cholera came, and, according to former outbreaks, another visitation was not due for four years to come, and this was also regarded as part of the fulfilment of the moullah's prophecy, and hence the great fear of the Amir and the prince, who thought they saw in all this their own death, and it accounts also for the prince losing control of himself when his favourite wife died. The murdered moullah was a man with a large and powerful following, and the two moullahs who gave the verdict for his death lived in constant fear of the retaliation of his followers, who had sworn to avenge him. One of them got cholera, and almost died of it.

During the summer months I used to put a tent

on the roof and sleep there. It was much fresher and cooler than in the house, for the nights in summer are hot, and there is little or no wind. As the roofs of the houses are flat and walled round they are generally used by the people for such purposes and to sit on in the evenings, and also the women use them for exercise and to get fresh air, as they are not allowed to go outside, and very few houses, and those only of the wealthy, have gardens attached to them which can be given for the sole use of women, because gardens to be of use to women must be walled round so high that they cannot be overlooked by neighbouring houses. It is also for this reason that houses are built in the form of a square with an inner courtyard where the women are free from the observation of neighbours; but the courtyards are usually small and dirty, and the smell from rotten refuse thrown there makes them unfit for places of recreation. During the spring, on my return in the evening from the workshops or elsewhere—for working hours are from early morning till evening—I used to spend a good deal of time on the roof attending to seedlings which were planted in boxes and kept up there, where they had less chance of being uprooted, until they were ready for transplanting; and I put the seeds in at the earliest possible time so that I might get salads and other things without having to wait until they were in the market. On the roof, too, I sometimes amused myself, and any amusement was welcome, in flying different sorts of kites, and in

this I was soon imitated by those living near, but the house being close to the pass between the Sher Darwasa and Asman Heights I lost several of them through the sudden gusts of wind which sweep along the gorge there.

For those who like such things Kabul affords a good field for the collection of old curios, swords, knives, shields, matchlocks, chain armour, etc., some of which are extremely ancient, and from the Arabic on many of the swords one might imagine them having been used against the Crusaders of old. Coins which date back to the time when Alexander the Great left his governors at different places on the route when he set out to conquer India can also be obtained, but a good knowledge of such is required, as they are counterfeited and sold there. Hindoos, of whom there are a few hundred resident in Kabul, usually have the stocks of curios, but they are afraid to bring them themselves to the Europeans because of the sepoys, who make them disgorge a good deal of their profits on leaving the house, and they cannot very well refuse to give anything when the sepoys threaten to make up a case against them, and report that they were carrying information to the Feringhee, as I have overheard them say.

On great festivals it was usual for the Europeans to attend durbar to salaam the Amir and afterwards do the same to the princes. On these occasions the durbar wore a different aspect to what it did at other times, for now all present, including the Amir, were

merry and joking, and pleasantry was the order of the day. Some of the officials and others would be sitting on the floor playing chess, and the Amir would bet on one or the other of the players, and occasionally give advice as to the move to be made, for the Amir was a great chess player, and there were few in his court who could compete with him. The jester of the court would be in great form, and raise many a laugh with story and joke. It was on these occasions that the late Amir would mostly indulge in reminiscences of his career and talk of the places and men he had seen in Russia. One, who was a Russian merchant, the Amir always spoke of with feeling when relating the good turns this merchant had done him, for the merchant had on one occasion saved him from a good deal of embarrassment by a timely loan of money. The Amir once told me that he had worked for a watchmaker for some time in order to learn that trade, having little else to do to amuse himself, and he related various amusing stories of the clockmaker's wife, who seemed to have ruled her husband in a very strict manner; but the Amir's conception of humour was too broad for the stories to bear repetition.

The present Amir's court on days of festival lacks the noise and fun of his father's, for at all times he exacts the strictest order and decorum from those in his court, and he never unbends except to those of his relations with whom he is intimate, or unless there are but a few present. He was much more

approachable before he became Amir, but he was never fond of noisy merriment, and cared little for the rude jokes of the court jesters. He is fond of that which will amuse him in a quiet manner and help time to pass, and is always interested in the magic lantern he has, and when that is being worked he will look for hours at the different pictures projected on to the screen.

Europeans in Kabul are not looked upon as amenable to the laws which govern the people there, but should they do anything which seriously violated any one of the laws which are common to all countries they would no doubt be deported to India, but so far no European resident has offended against any such law. The late Amir was chary of doing anything which another country could call in question, and once when an Afghan petitioned him to help him recover his dues from the Indian Government for supplies made to their army during the English occupation of 1879–81, the Amir thought the best way to do justice to the man, without committing himself to any decision, was to appoint six persons chosen from among the leading merchants in Kabul, together with myself, to go into the case, but the man's papers, which were in English, showed nothing but a full settlement of all dues. Another case in which I was appointed as one of the jury was that of a Continental merchant who came to Kabul to settle his affairs, who claimed the full amount of salary specified in the agreement, alleging that

although the amount of business done was less than that agreed upon in the contract, which made the salary contingent upon a fixed amount of business done annually, he was not responsible for the falling off, for the business entrusted to him was less than agreed upon, and the annual salary stated in the agreement should therefore be paid him, as he had done the best he could, and had always been faithful to his contract and to the Government. Letters which he had written to one of the officials, and which had been stopped in the post and opened by the Amir's order, were, however, produced, which showed that he, in writing at least, thought little of the Amir's promises, and the letters also gave his opinion of the Amir in a rather bald manner. The Amir therefore contended that, on the face of those letters, he could not entrust business to a man who doubted his promises and had a far from exalted opinion of himself, and so my presence, together with Mrs. Daly's, was considered necessary on the jury, more to shame the merchant before other Europeans than anything else. I must, however, say that the letters showed that the merchant had thoroughly grasped the character of the Amir's officials.

In the matter of letters, it used to be a very common thing for letters to the English in Kabul to be stopped and read by the appointed Government spies, and generally, after being read, they were not sent on—an Englishman's private letter being a trivial matter in the eyes of the officials concerned.

Opening letters to and from the English in Kabul was, of course, to find out if there was any spying or reporting going on between them and the Indian Government, but in the present Amir's time this was stopped a good deal, and more of the letters sent to and from reached their destination safely. Post letters, however, are never looked upon as very sacred among the Afghans, and before all post letters were enclosed in a bag and sealed, with a list of the letters enclosed, and orders had been given to the postmasters that the letters of one post were not to exceed a certain weight, the postrunners used to open the parcel of letters and throw many down the mountain-side, in order to lighten the burden they carried.

I was told of a case which concerned an important letter. It was from the British Agent to his Government, and the Amir wanted it, so orders were given and the post-carrier at a certain place on the road was killed, and all the letters he was carrying were taken back to Kabul. The murder and theft was blamed upon the tribes of the district where the crime was committed, and this seems to show that neither letters nor life are held sacred. However, the Amir got the letter he wanted, and nothing was said that could reflect upon his integrity.

Letters are carried by men on five-mile relays, laid between Kabul and Peshawar; each man running (not walking) backwards and forwards over his own five miles, carrying outward letters one way

and in-coming letters the other. In this way letters are carried between the two places in three days. The postage is fourpence per miskal, which is about one-sixth of an ounce, and stamps have to be affixed to the letters; but the outgoing letters have the stamps taken off them by the Amir's postmaster in Peshawar before being put in the Indian post. Afghanistan is not in the postal union, and, therefore, letters to Kabul must have the postage paid on them in Peshawar or else be paid by the addressee.

When magazines and periodicals are sent to Kabul the postage on them is a large item, and I once noticed that the postage I paid on a small magazine between Peshawar and Kabul (some two hundred miles) was three rupees, while the postage on the same from England to Peshawar was a penny. Letters sent from Kabul to India have to be addressed in Persian, and Indian stamps must be put on the envelopes besides paying the postage in Afghanistan.

One person in Kabul with whom English people are greatly brought in contact is the interpreter. There are several interpreters, but only one who is appointed to interpret between the Amir and the English residents, and this post is one which involves a good deal of work, for the man, in addition to interpreting whenever the Amir or the princes require his services, has to translate all letters from the English to the Amir, and *vice versâ*. The Government correspondence with other countries is translated

by others, who are specially appointed for the post, and they are not encouraged to mix with the English people in Kabul. To be an interpreter a man must be quick at catching all inflections of meaning in the two languages, and must be ever ready to put in a word of his own in case he fails to hear something which is said on either side, for the Amir is impatient of having anything repeated. He must also be, in a measure, conversant with the subject under discussion, as otherwise technical words would bring him to a standstill, and very often such English words require several sentences of Persian to explain them, as they have no equivalents except those adopted from other languages of late years. But particularly must he be able to interpret all that is said quickly and without mistake, otherwise he will be put aside and another man taken on in his place, and to him this means disgrace for always.

CHAPTER XIII

SOLDIERS AND ARMS

Clothing—Reviews—Drill—Uniforms of Amir's bodyguard—Arms—Pay—Medals—Length of service—Substitutes—Barracks—Mode of life—Gambling among soldiers—Different tribes forming regiments—Thief tribe and regiment—Officers and promotion—Bands—Afghan anecdotes of incidents during war 1879–81—Afghan Army as a fighting machine—Condition of country for warfare—Illustration of one side of Afghan character.

THE first thing that strikes one on seeing a regiment of Afghan soldiers is their irregular, slovenly appearance and slouching gait. Their clothes, for they have no uniforms for regular use, are of any sort and pattern as the wearer may desire or his purse can afford. Some have old English army or railway coats; others have coats of various colours and materials which have been made in the bazar; and coats made by the bazar tailors fit where they touch. Some have cloth trousers, some cotton ones, and some the Afghan tom-bons. Many wear the Afghan tom-bons with the shirt outside, as is usual in Eastern countries, and a sheepskin jacket, and this is the dress more generally worn, particularly among those regiments which are composed of hillmen. All of them, of course, have leather belts with pouches on either side, for neither soldiers nor civilians consider

themselves dressed without them, and an Afghan soldier or civilian who was seen without a belt would certainly look undressed to any one who had been some time in the country. For headgear the turban is commonly worn; but there are different varieties of caps and hats, of which one that is liked by many is similar to the Russian military peaked cap. Cavalry soldiers, or sowars as they are called, wear long boots of the Russian pattern, with very high heels, which give the wearers a curious perched-up appearance; and these boots are much bepatched and mended. As I do not remember seeing a sowar with new boots on at any time, I fancy they must all be bought secondhand. The clothes the soldiers wear are generally old and much worn, but I have at times seen a havildar (sergeant) with a new coat, and as the man has to save up for many days before he can afford one, he pays great care in the selection of the cloth, and usually gets it of a vivid colour, light yellow or blue for preference, which soon looks the worse for wear, and necessitates the man spending many a half-hour when off duty in cleaning it. His old coat he sells to one of the men of his company.

When a regiment is drawn up in line the rifles are held at all angles, for the men are not drilled as drilling is understood in other countries, and on the march a regiment looks like an armed mob rather than soldiers. In order to obtain a good appearance during the two annual reviews, the regiments are marched on to the review ground, and the officers

then move the men singly into their proper places, pulling one man forward here and pushing another back there, until they form a double line of somewhat varying straightness, and when the review is finished (the review consists of the Amir, or the prince as his deputy, riding past the different regiments), the men are again pushed into place to form fours, and are then marched off, all keeping their own step, back to the barracks, and on the road one man or another joins the four in front or behind in order to speak to a comrade, so that the little formation they had is soon upset, and the regiment goes along as it likes best, and that is—anyhow. The men, after review or parade, which latter is the same as the review, except that one regiment only is placed in line and inspected by its officers, seem to consider that they have taken part in manœuvres of considerable intricacy, and appear to be rather proud of themselves. The men of the Amir's bodyguard, however, are drilled. The drill consists in the men, having already been taught to form themselves into fours, marching slowly in time to a drum-beat, and swinging each leg in turn high up in the air in front of them before bringing the foot down. This drill, which takes place on the main road outside the Arak palace, is witnessed by a large number of admiring citizens, but the spectacle of a regiment solemnly swinging their legs well up as they march, taking four or five seconds to each step, reminds one of a batch of recruits doing the goose-step.

Regiments are occasionally drawn up on parade and fire volleys of blank cartridges; but there are no rifle ranges at which the men are trained to shoot. Some batteries of artillery occasionally have target practice: but this is more to test guns than actual training. Those artillerymen whom I have seen at practice were very erratic in their shooting, and were seldom nearer than fifty yards of the object fired at, and when their general sighted a gun himself and got the target at two thousand yards, he was so pleased that he had to walk up and down for a few minutes. The reason men are not trained in shooting is, I think, because in Afghanistan among all classes of men a cartridge is looked upon as a cartridge, and not a thing to be used without necessity. The only good shots I have seen are the workmen who test all rifles and guns as they are turned out of the shops. I have sometimes, when practising, given the small rifle I was using to one or other of the soldiers with me to try a shot, and in no case was any man at all near the target. The hillmen who are more accustomed to shooting and are sometimes good shots, lie down and rest the rifle on a rock when firing.

The Amir's bodyguard, foot and cavalry, are the only regiments properly uniformed, and the Amir sees that they keep their uniforms clean, and their arms too. The foot-guards are armed with Lee-Metford rifles and bayonets, and the horse-guards with revolvers, swords, and carbines. Of the other

troops, a few regiments of the most trusted men are armed with Martinis, and the rest have Sniders. The artillery batteries have six and nine pounder guns, and there are some mule batteries with six and three pounders, but the guns are badly sighted and of short range, the fuzes also are unreliable, and the shells of small efficiency, so that the artillery cannot be considered very formidable. The mules and horses used for the artillery and transport are strong and sturdy, and are used to mountain paths and roads, but the transport animals are too few for the service of a large army. The rifles, which are made in the Government shops, are also badly sighted, and hardly two of them shoot alike. If they are used for firing against a large number of men massed together, the defective sighting may not make a great deal of difference; but accuracy is of first importance in a rifle, and the shooting of trained troops in action is sufficiently bad, without leaving much else to chance. Another great defect is that the powder, which is made in the country, fouls the bore after four or five rounds so badly that cleaning is necessary, for otherwise the kick of the gun prevents straight shooting, and tends to demoralize the shooter. Maxim and Gatling guns are also made in the shops, but owing to the inaccurate fitting of working parts, and the cartridges not being uniform and exact to gauge, it is seldom that a full belt of cartridges can be fired without a stop.

The pay of the troops is very inadequate, considering the dearness of food now to what it used to be. For infantry the pay was eight rupees Kabuli a month, until the present Amir, on his coming to the throne, raised it, to keep the troops contented, to ten rupees a month (6*s.* 8*d.*). Cavalry receive thirty rupees Kabuli a month (20*s.*), but have to find their own horse and its keep out of that. The Amir's foot-guards receive thirty rupees a month, and are men envied by the rest of the troops because of their princely incomes. The soldiers were far from content when the Amir advanced their pay by two rupees only, for they expected more, and talked of what they would do if they did not get it; but the Afghans are very much like sheep, and unless there is one to lead the way, they remain where they are, and do nothing but bleat occasionally. For each active service medal a soldier gets a rupee extra monthly, and a soldier therefore prizes his medals; but the loyalty medal given to all the troops by the present Amir, when after two years they had remained faithful to him, and had given no trouble, was in many cases pawned for the value of its silver in order to buy food, for the famine came on shortly after the medals were distributed. During the famine, when flour was unobtainable, the Government gave wheat in lieu of a certain portion of the soldiers' pay, and continued to do so until supplies from the new crops came in.

Soldiers and Arms

The length of a soldier's service is indefinite, and may be regarded as continuing until he is too old for his duties. Many of the soldiers have told me that they had not seen their families for over twenty years, for there are no recognized regulations regarding leave, and when it is absolutely necessary for a soldier to go to his home to settle some private affairs, he is allowed to do so provided he leaves a substitute behind him. In some cases the substitutes are quite young boys, and I have seen several of them in the Jidrani and other regiments of hillmen who were so small that the rifle they carried seemed huge in comparison ; but usually they were smart in carrying out their duties, and were quick in attending to orders. What their value would be on active service is another matter. The soldiers are mostly poor men, and some of them have nothing but their pay for themselves and family to depend upon, so when they find that they are growing old and their beards and hair getting grey, they dye them, in order to continue on the active list and go on drawing pay.

The barracks of the soldiers are unfurnished, that is, they have no beds, chairs, or tables, and the men sleep on the floor, excepting those who are fortunate enough to possess a charpai, or wooden bedstead, and for a dining-table they spread a coarse mat on the ground and sit on it while eating their food. Each paira (guard of seven men, including the havildar) carries its own cooking utensils, and it is the havildar's

duty to provide a chopper for cutting firewood and an iron plate on which to bake bread; the other utensils, which consist of a copper cooking-pot, a metal teapot, which is also used as a kettle, and handleless teacups, are provided by the men. As it is their custom to eat with their fingers direct from the pot, no knives and forks or plates are required.

When off duty they laze about in groups, or sit and listen while one of their number strums the rubard and sings, or else they tell stories. Many of the soldiers are inveterate gamblers, and although card-playing is strictly forbidden and severely punished when detected, it is very common among them, and leads to a good deal of crime, and I knew one man who shot himself because of his losses at cards. If their quarters are near a bazar, they stroll about there, and very often make themselves objectionable to the people, and generally show off as soldiers will when they have nothing better to do. The soldiers, however, do not have a great deal of time to themselves, for there are many guards which they have to mount and other duties on which they are kept busy. Their duties on guard are not tiring, and they do little but sit and sleep, except when they have to take their turn at sentry-go. They have passwords for the night, and the word is changed every second or third night. With those on guard round the Amir the password is different each night, and is strictly enforced.

The various regiments are usually named after

the tribe or country they come from, such as the Mohmundai, Jidrani, Jarji, Kandahari, Kohistani, Ardeel, 'Oud Khel. Then there are the sappers and miners, which regiment is entirely composed of Hazaras, and the artillery, which is called the toop knana. All the men of the army are Afghans, excepting the sappers and miners and the Kotwali (police) regiment, the latter being derisively styled by other regiments as "panch padar" (men with five fathers). The Amir's horse-guards are called the "Rissala Shahi."

The 'Oud Khels are the thief tribe, and as it was impossible to stop their depredations by other means, for the chiefs of the tribe said their land was unproductive and they had no other means of living, the late Amir formed the bulk of them into a regiment, and gave the rest of the tribe to understand that they must stop stealing from their fellow-countrymen, telling them that if they wanted to steal they must go to India to do it. Many of the rifles stolen from Peshawur and other Indian cantonments could be accounted for by these people. The 'Oud Khels used to give the former Amirs of the country a good deal of trouble, and they resisted the various feeble attempts made at different times to keep them in order; but Amir Abdur Rahman was too strong for them, as he was for most of the lawless people of the country.

There is a story told by the people of Kabul of Amir Shere Ali and the chief of the 'Oud Khels.

The latter had been sent for to be told that unless the tribe stopped their thieving, which had of late been very flagrant, the Amir would have each robber caught and hanged. The chief told him that no one could catch an 'Oud Khel in the exercise of his profession, for they were all past masters, and in proof of what he said he undertook to rob the sleeping shawl from under the Amir himself that night, and consented to being hanged if he was caught while doing so. The next morning the chief appeared before the Amir and produced the sleeping shawl from under his coat, handed it to him, saying that he had redeemed his word. The Amir was astounded that the man could pass his guards, make his way undetected into his sleeping chamber, and there take from under him the shawl he slept on, without waking him; and from that time, it was said, Amir Shere Ali left the 'Oud Khels alone.

The 'Oud Khel regiment used to take their turn of guard in the workshops, each regiment in turn supplies a company for a month on this duty, and their captain I found to be a simple-minded man, and having helped some of his men during the first cholera epidemic that occurred while I was there, we became acquainted. He used to come to my office at times during the dinner-hour and chat with me, and one day I asked him to teach me the Pushtoo language, as I wished to learn it and had no book to study it from. He seemed uncomfortable when I asked him and remained silent, but after a time he

said he could not teach languages, because he was not accustomed to it, but he would teach me to thieve, and he undertook to make me so efficient that in a few weeks no one would be able to catch me doing it. The 'Oud Khel regiment was disbanded by the Amir at one time, but they at once took to their old profession, and complaints were so loud that the Amir had them enrolled again.

The titles of the officers of the army are, Super Salah or Commander-in-Chief, Naib Salah, his deputy, Jinrael (general), Kernael (colonel), Kameedand (commandant), Kaftan (captain), Subadar (lieutenant of foot), Risaldar (lieutenant of horse), Havildar (sergeant of foot), Duffedar (sergeant of horse). The chief officers of the army are selected from the Amir's family, or from among his favourites, and there is no promotion by grades, but only by favouritism. The late Amir, when forming a regiment, would have the men drawn up in front of him, and then, by simply judging the character of those he thought suitable, would select from among them those who were to be the officers.

There are several bands, some with string and some with wind instruments, and the music the brass bands bring forth is something to be remembered, for all the instruments seem to keep their own time, and each man apparently plays a tune of his own, and does his best to make what he plays over heard above the others. The result is rather staggering when they are close to one. There is a bagpipe band,

too, and snatches of their music would make it appear that they try to play Scotch airs; and the men of this band imitate the Highland dress, the skirt being represented by a check print shirt, which hangs below the tunic and outside the trousers, which latter are often dirty white calico ones. This band is a tribute to the fighting qualities of the Highlanders, whom the Afghans look upon as superior to all others, and say they are real devils.

I was told by one man that during the fighting on the Sher Darwaza heights by the city of Kabul, one day the English had to retire, and he saw among the last to go one of the Highlanders running leisurely back carrying his rifle under his arm, with the muzzle pointing behind, and, as he ran, slipping cartridges into the breach, and firing back at the enemy. The man said he could see that the Highlander's heart was not in his running away. On this day's fighting many of the citizens turned out to take part in it, and the man who told me the foregoing was one of them.

The Afghans appear to judge music by the volume of sound created, for on one of the festivals, when I went with some others to salaam the Queen-Sultana, we were entertained in an open pavilion in the garden, and three bands were sent to play to us. They did so, stationing themselves on three sides of the pavilion and loudly playing different things at once, and it was rather trying, for they

don't get tired soon, but the people round about seemed to think it quite all right.

The Afghan Army, regarded as a fighting machine matched against civilized troops, could not be considered efficient. The Afghan, as a soldier, has many good qualities; he can live for days on a few handfuls of grain, and endure considerable fatigue at the same time; he can sleep in the open on the coldest night, wrapped in his sheepskin, and do no more than he is accustomed to; over mountains he is untiring; and he is plucky and would fight well, provided he had confidence in his officers. He also appreciates pluck, and Lieutenant Hamilton, who was with Cavagnari, and was one of those massacred, is to this day spoken of as the brave Feringhee. His own officers, however, are no better than himself in their knowledge of the art of war, and being chosen mostly from among the men, they have little authority as officers, and the influence of those who are looked up to by the men is entirely due to their own individuality. There is very little discipline, and unless an officer exerts his personality to make the men carry out his orders, he will find that they take very little notice of them, or him; for the soldiers are quick to judge who is their master, and leniency or consideration is looked upon by them as one of two things—fear of themselves, or the act of a fool.

None of the generals have any knowledge of modern warfare, for their experience has been

confined to the wild tribes of those countries brought under the rule of the Afghans of late years, and of those who fought against the English during the last war there are few, if any, living. When they talk of fighting any foreign power, they rely on the number of soldiers and hillmen that the preaching of the Jihad will influence to fight for their country; and another thing they look upon as advantageous to themselves is that the country is so broken up and mountainous, it would offer considerable difficulty to the effective and rapid movement of invading troops, and it is this which forms one of the Amir's chief objections to the introduction of railways in his country. The Afghans rarely care to risk a pitched battle, and are besides more accustomed to guerilla warfare, and in the event of invasion it is the latter method of fighting which would, no doubt, be adopted, and among the mountain passes there are places where a few determined men, properly armed, could keep back an army. For an invading army there would be great difficulty in getting heavy artillery moved about in most parts of the country, and mule batteries would be required; but in the plains around Kabul, Jelalabad, and Kandahar, big guns would be wanted, at least equal in range to the Afghan guns, and to get these to the Kabul plains, except by two round-about routes, would be very difficult.

The Afghan authorities have now more confidence in the efficiency of their army, and consider

it quite different and superior to what it was when Lord Roberts was there, and it is possible, in the event of another war with them, that they would offer battle in force, but if the day went against them, the rest of the fighting would probably be of the guerilla sort, to which they are more accustomed, unless they considerably outnumbered the enemy at any time. In their own fighting, one against the other, there is generally one pitched battle, and whosoever is routed runs away and fights no more; they say themselves, that a defeated army runs, and does not stop running, under three days.

In time of war women carry supplies to the men, and then the laws of "purdah" are suspended, and being a case of necessity, they are allowed to show their faces without shame. It is well known that the women, during the wars with the English, used to go out at night after a battle, and mutilate the bodies of the dead, and kill the wounded and dying. Many also took part in the fighting. As an illustration of one side of the Afghan character, I may mention an incident told me by a man, who belonged to the Kandahar district. His cousin owned a house some miles out of Kandahar (I have mentioned that houses are protected by high walls), and after one of the battles fought by the English against the tribes about, there were many stragglers following the main army back towards Kandahar. One day his cousin was told by one of his men that an Englishman was outside the walls shouting, and on going to the roof,

whence he could look over the wall, he saw a Highlander carrying a rifle, who called out to give him some food. The cousin ran back to his room, and brought out a rifle, and climbing up to the roof again, knelt behind the wall, and aiming carefully at the soldier, fired. The man dropped, but was not killed, as a movement could now and then be observed, and the cousin feared to go out to get the rifle, for which he had shot him; so they kept watch for two days before it was decided that life must be extinct, and during that time the soldier called often and piteously for water, but no one went near, fearing vengeance as long as there was life left in him.

CHAPTER XIV

TRADES AND COMMERCE

Amir's interest in mechanical tools, guns, etc.—Workshops—Consumption of fuel—Ustads and workmen—Pay of men—Trades, shopkeepers, and merchants—Produce of country—Exports and imports—Irrigation of crops and fights about water—Caravans and methods of carrying freight—Weights and measures—Mirzas and offices—Debt collecting—Hindoos and Hindoo money-lenders—Mint and coinage of country.

AMIR ABDUR RAHMAN was greatly interested in all mechanical work, and his interest extended to trade, and the merchants carrying it on. The status of a merchant, in his opinion, was equal to that of any of his Government officials, and any complaint or representation a merchant might make to him was sure of a hearing. When he started his workshops, his avowed intention in doing so was not only to be able to turn out guns and rifles, but to educate his people. He said he wanted to teach them the trades of other countries, in order that they might raise themselves to a level with the people of other nations, whereby they would not only make themselves and their country as prosperous as others were, but also by having an interest in work, would lose their habits of idleness, which caused them to drift into lawlessness and wrong-doing. He afterwards complained

many times that, in spite of all he had done for them, his people were still the same, and that although he had killed so many thousands, the lesson failed to have the effect he desired on the rest of his subjects.

His son, the present Amir, also takes the keenest interest in all things mechanical, and having been, from the time he was a boy, the chief officer of the Government workshops, visiting them once a week, and inspecting each department and all that was turned out, his knowledge of machinery is greater than that possessed by his father. There are some matters, however, that the Amir and the officials connected with the workshops cannot properly grasp, and occasions them a good deal of thought and perplexity. For instance, they cannot quite understand that it requires a given quantity of heat to generate a given quantity of steam, and as they burn a large amount of wood daily in the boilers (they have no coal), they are ever trying to reduce this quantity, without lessening the work of the engines. Once they thought they had solved the question, by using larger and thicker pieces of wood for the boilers, because these burnt more slowly than small pieces, and then when these huge lumps of wood failed to keep up the head of steam, and the engines ran slower and slower, they suspected the firemen of being the cause of it, and so had several of them thrashed.

Another time the stock of firewood for the boilers

ran out, and a supply of freshly cut wood was brought in daily, for use until further large supplies could be arranged for, and stocked to dry. The wood being wet, it naturally burned slowly, and the steam could not be kept up, and although the daily consumption of wood remained the same, the engines worked worse than ever. They tried many things to alter this state of affairs, and looked in all directions but the right one to find the cause of the engines not working well, even opening out the cylinders to see if the pistons were right, and when all their investigations failed to locate the cause of the trouble, the firemen were thrashed again. The firemen were once convicted of falsifying the quantity of wood burnt daily, making out that a larger quantity was used than was correct, and selling the balance, and after that they were ever suspected of doing their work badly or trying to spoil things for revenge. This was principally the reason that, whenever one of the officials got a bright idea for reducing the quantity of wood burnt daily, the firemen were invariably accused of spoiling the experiment, and as often as not were punished on suspicion. The life of a man who works on that which is little understood by those over him is not all roses.

Although I was nominally in charge of the boilers and engines, with all sorts of other work, I was not responsible for the quantities of materials used, that being in the hands of another official, and the inherent suspicious nature of the Afghan, together

with his ignorance of work, makes him chary of accepting advice on such matters, so that, although I was consulted, my opinion, which exonerated the firemen, was looked upon as prejudiced, and my proposal to cut the wood into small pieces was regarded as a desire to waste Government property. Soon after my appointment as engineer to the Government, I had received another firman (Amir's written order) which placed the engines and boilers in my charge in addition to the work for which I had been engaged, and I was told to thoroughly examine them, as the engines worked very badly, and to report if it was the fault of the engines, boilers, or the firemen. No firman is given without all people whom it concerns knowing it very soon after, and when I went to the boiler-house the next day, I found the men there very gloomy, and they probably thought that, as they who were on the work always and had done their best to keep steam up on the limit of firewood had failed, there was little chance of my doing better, and then, no doubt, I would put the blame on them, according to the method of their own people, who always blame the men under them when they are unable to right matters. My examination of the boilers showed that they were encrusted with a thick deposit of lime and mud, for no attempt had been made to clean them out since they were first started, so the men told me, and it took about two weeks to put matters right. After this the firemen always referred to me as an authority when blamed

NEW PORTION OF KABUL WORKSHOPS, WITH THE SIRDAR'S BUNGALOW AND OFFICE IN CENTRE.

[*To face p.* 232.

for their work, and it was considered that I had found out their swindling and had promised not to report them if they carried on the work properly in future. In many other things I found that it was thought I favoured the workmen, and shielded them from punishment because I pitied them, for I let it be known very clearly that I considered the pay of most of the men inadequate, and though I was able to have the wages of many of the men increased as opportunity offered, it was done more as a favour to me than anything else, and other workmen remained at the same rate of pay on which they started work.

Another idea they had was that of bringing water to a higher level by means of syphons, and one day, when I was in durbar with the late Amir, he held forth on this subject to some chiefs who who had come to see him from a distant part of the country, explaining to them, that if you take an inverted syphon, and pour water down one of its legs, the water rises up out of the other one; it did not rise up far above the level of the second opening, he said, but he intended using a series of them to bring water in this way to a dry stretch of land near Kabul, which stood above the level of the neighbouring streams, and he turned and asked me, if what he said was not correct. I gave no answer, as an affirmative would involve me in the carrying out of the work, and to say otherwise would not be polite in public durbar, when it was the Amir who spoke. Some time afterwards the principal ustads (foremen)

of the workshops were sent for by the Amir, who explained his idea to them, and told them to think it over and see who could do this work, either by such syphons or a pump that would work by itself. They retired and gave several days to the consideration of the problem, and making various experiments, and I heard of the matter by their eventually coming to me in ones and twos, to ask my opinion and advice.

In the iron and brass foundries, I found that the quantity of fuel allowed for drying moulds and cores was so small that almost half of the castings turned out bad. This was another case of saving money for the Government by the official in charge, whose pay had been increased for so doing, as a well-wisher of the Government. The great percentage of bad castings caused thereby was an item of loss not considered until I pointed it out.

The Afghan officials who manage shops or works of any description very much resemble the travelling M.P. who spends three or four months in India in the cold season, and then goes home prepared to explain the cause of, and a remedy for, all problems connected with its governing.

The Kabul workshops comprise two large machine-shops, with about a hundred machines of sorts; two cartridge-making shops with machinery for turning out solid drawn Martini and Snider cartridges; metal fuze shop, blacksmiths' shops, steam hammer shop, iron and brass foundries, mint, rolling-mill shop, and the boiler and engine houses. There are besides

these, hand shops for making limbers and wheels of guns, gun cartridges, cartridge and shell filling, artillery harness, bandoliers, boots, etc., gun browning, black powder, percussion cap powder, leather tanning and currying, soap and candle, spirit distilling, acid making, electro-plating and polishing, sword and bayonet making and grinding, bullet moulding, tin and copper work, carpentry, pattern making, painting, household furniture making, etc. Between four and five thousand men are employed.

The Afghan workman is intelligent, and can, if he will only give his mind to his work, or domestic or other affairs will allow him to do so, do work requiring considerable skill and intelligence in a manner which is highly creditable. This is the Afghan workman at his best. In the case of work requiring very exact fitting or finish, they generally fail, mostly because they have not thoroughly mastered the art of making gauges and working to them, and it is chiefly on this account that the field and machine guns are unreliable. In some cases a workman appears to have displayed a considerable amount of ingenuity in ascertaining the wrong way to do a thing and then so doing it; but there is, however, no doubt, that with education and training the Afghan would make a fine workman. I have often known a man ruin his work, otherwise well finished, through lack of technical knowledge of some process in one part of it, and I was generally applied to for help after the failure, for they all

like to do things off their own bat, if they can, hoping, thereby, to get all the credit from the Amir. Much of the reason for their not applying to any one for help is the fault of the officials, who, when bringing a man with some special work he has done before the Amir, claim that the man was at a standstill in this or that way during its process, and that they assisted him in his difficulty, thus cheapening the work of the man's hands to their own credit, and in some cases the official claims the entire credit, making out that the man worked to instructions. However, it is one of the results of the system of government that all men try to bring themselves to the Amir's favourable notice, and the means are of little account for so desirable an end.

In all work there is an ustad (teacher or foreman) and his shagirds (pupils or workmen). When the shagird has learnt all he can learn from his ustad, or thinks he has, he usually casts about for a way of ousting his master and taking his place himself. This he generally sets about doing by privately reporting to the Amir that his ustad indents for much more material than his work requires, and sells the surplus to help defray his living expenses, which, as all his neighbours will testify, are far above his income. This does not always have the effect aimed at, and cause the ustad to lose his position that the shagird may jump into it; but the ustad is perhaps made a prisoner, and wears leg irons as he goes about his work as usual

during the day, and at night is taken back to prison, while the mirzas set about the task of checking his accounts, and as this is a work of years, the ustad often dies before the matter is settled.

In any work which is accompanied by risk, such as powder making, etc., the Afghan gets careless of precautions after a time, and the result is an occasional explosion, which kills many and unnerves the rest for a month or two, but eventually the same carelessness prevails, until another accident makes them cautious again for a time. The making of fulminate of mercury was prolific of accidents at one time, but no further accidents happened after I introduced the usual method of preparation, but some accidents occurred through roughly handling the filled percussions caps, and once sixty thousand of them exploded through carelessness on the part of one of the foremen, who took up a few of them to look at, and then threw them back into the box where the rest were; four were killed, and some others were permanently disabled, while one man was blinded, a cap entering each eye, but was otherwise uninjured. In one powder explosion twenty-one men were killed, and many others injured, chiefly through the force of the explosion bringing down a heavy roof on the men who were working underneath. There were several other accidents through carelessness, each time causing death or injury to one or two, and eventually the Amir gave me orders to draw up a list of regulations, and give

full particulars of what was necessary, in order to minimize risk in the making and handling of explosives. Having sanctioned this, the necessary work was put in hand, and the regulations came into force, after which the accidents stopped.

The pay of the workman is mostly fixed at starvation rates, though several of the men, who have had their pay increased for doing some small work for the Amir himself, get too much so far as ability is concerned. The workshops were started about eighteen years ago, and the pay of many of the workmen, who were boys when they were first engaged, is still the same, although they have become of greater value to the Government by the experience they have gained, and that which makes it still harder for them is that the price of food has increased tremendously, and bread, which is their chief food, is four times the price now to what it was then. There are men who have been working on special machines from the time the shops started, drawing eight rupees per month (5*s.* 4*d.*), and these are men with wives and families, and sometimes other female relatives dependent on them. How they live on it is a problem, but they are men with no surplus adipose substance on their bones, as may be imagined. Others, and they are mostly boys, who are taken on now for any new work, commence at ten rupees (6*s.* 8*d.*) per month. Most of the ordinary machine men (turners, etc.), and hand-fitters, get from twenty to thirty rupees

per month (13*s.* 4*d.* to 20*s.*). Ustads get from twenty to one hundred rupees per month (13*s.* 4*d.* to 66*s.* 8*d.*).

Excepting in the Government workshops there are very few trades carried on in the country. The few trades there are, and they are all carried on in a small way only, are coppersmiths, tinsmiths, blacksmiths, gold and silversmiths, carpenters, leather workers, etc. The bulk of the commerce of the country is confined to dried fruits, which are exported to India and Russia. Fresh grapes are also sent to India, wrapped in wool, and enclosed in small round wooden boxes. Kabul and its neighbourhood produce large quantities of very good grapes, which sell in the season at about a penny for eight pounds, and for the best varieties at about a farthing per pound. I made wine from these grapes, blending two or three sorts; and after maturing for three years or so, it was equal to any of the wines commonly sold in India, and being pure grape juice, it was perhaps better than most. Apricots are also grown in large quantities, and grapes and apricots form the bulk of the dried fruits exported. Grain is also exported, though not in large quantities; but, with cheap means of carriage, a large trade in several articles could be brought about. Most fruits and vegetables grow well in Kabul, and large crops are given, the climate being particularly adapted for all fruits not requiring a tropical sun. In Jelalabad and Kandahar districts

the heat is such that most tropical fruits are grown, and in the former district sugar-cane is produced in large quantities.

A good deal of silk is also produced, and the country offers great facilities for an extensive cultivation of the silkworm. The silk is at present produced in three districts—Bokhara, Herat, and Kohistan, and there only in comparatively small quantities. Carpets are also made: those similar to Persian carpets in Herat and Turkestan, and felt carpets in Kandahar and Hazara. Cloth of various descriptions is also manufactured by means of handlooms in different parts of the country, and in Ghazni numbers of posteens (overcoats) are made from sheep skins. Most of the latter articles are not exported, for only enough is produced to meet the demands of the country. Numbers of camels, horses, cattle, and sheep are bred in different districts, but few are exported, and for the past few years horses are not allowed to be taken out of the country for sale, something having been said about them being bought up for the use of the Indian army. Turkestan is the best cattle and horse-raising country in Afghanistan, as it possesses large tracts of fertile country for grazing; and to hear Turkestanis talk of the agricultural and mineral richness of their country, one would imagine it the Eldorado. A small quantity of timber is floated down the river from the Jelalabad district for sale in India, but the quantity is very small, for the hills and mountains

SOLDIERS ON GUARD IN GARDEN OUTSIDE THE KABUL WORKSHOPS EATING FOOD.

(From a drawing by the Author.)

[*To face p.* 240.

in Afghanistan are for the most part quite barren, and there are very few trees except in one or two isolated places, and not many there.

There is little or no rainfall in the country, but in the winter snowstorms are frequent, and the melting of the snow on the mountains gives the water required for the crops during spring and summer, the water being led over the land by means of channels for the necessary irrigation. These irrigation channels are cleaned out every spring, and on the day appointed for clearing the stream, all the men who use the water are called together by drum and fife (or an instrument similar to it), and they work up stream each day in a body, clearing away weeds, and deepening the channel where it has silted up until the whole is finished.

There are frequent fights among cultivators about the first use of the water from the subsidiary channels, for it frequently happens that the smaller ones do not carry enough water to irrigate the land on both sides at once, and naturally quarrels ensue as to who shall have the water first. Long handled spades are generally in the hands of those who are quarrelling, and these are used, and men are killed at times, for the spade inflicts a heavy blow and cuts deeply. The quarrels also frequently lead to one man firing the other's crops in revenge, and then lawsuits, with numbers of paid witnesses on both sides, result.

The mills for grinding flour are fixed at

convenient points on the irrigation streams, and are worked by water-wheels, which, however, have a very low efficiency, less than a quarter of the power available being transmitted to the mill. The mills are of a very old type; one stone revolves on a fixed lower one, and the grain is fed in at a hole pierced near the centre of the upper stone. The flour from the first grinding is very coarse, and it is reground two or more times, according to the degree of fineness required.

There is a great want in Afghanistan of some cheap and speedy means of carrying freight. At present the cumbersome method of carrying all things by pack-animals is the only means at disposal, and the time occupied in getting over a short distance necessarily makes the system a costly one, for it takes a week for them to travel a hundred miles, and the cost of doing so works out at about eighteen shillings a hundred-weight for that distance, and this in a country where all things are cheap. The weight and size of any article carried is also limited to the carrying capacity of the horse or camel employed.

The Koochee people do most of the carrying of goods from place to place, and they are a hardy race, similar to gipsies in having no fixed home. They move about in caravans of fifty to a hundred animals, which include camels, horses, donkeys, and sheep, for sheep have to carry small packs too. The women and children travel with the caravan wherever it goes, and the household pots and pans, with a few

fowl, are carried on the top of a donkey, the fowl, with their feet tied to prevent escape, sitting on the top of the pack, and the baby, if there is one, wrapped in a shawl, and carried in a bundle beside them. They often have a large number of sheep with them, and when the lambs are too young to stand the journey the boys and girls carry them in their arms. When they stop for a while at any place they rig up rough huts, composed of sticks covered with mats or grass, but at other times the shelter of a tree or rock suffices. They are a finely built people, with free, graceful movements, due, no doubt, to the open-air life they lead and the constant exercise, and as no sickly child could live such a life, it is a case of the survival of the fittest.

One such caravan passed me one day while I was standing near a road I was constructing through a ravine, and the reports from some blasting going on near by made one of the young camels bolt. In doing so he collided with a full-grown girl of the caravan, and she was thrown some distance, landing with a good deal of force on some sharp jutting boulders and stones. I started forward, thinking she must be killed; but the girl, after a few moments, sprang up, brushed the dust from her clothes, and walked on unconcernedly. The Koochee women are not purdah, though they cover their faces with a shawl as they pass an Englishman. During the harvest months, when the heat of the lowland plains is too great for the pack-animals, and there is

little carrying work done, the Koochee people move from one place to another, working as harvesters, and when the crops of one district are cut and in, they go on to another; for owing to differences in altitude the harvesting time in different districts varies. The men who look after the camels fasten them at night-time in a circle, so that the camels, in a way, form a wheel, with bodies as spokes, and noses pointing to the hub. The man, when he sleeps, lies down in the centre under the necks of the camels, and rests there unmolested by them.

Tea is imported into the country through India. Generally speaking, the Chinese green tea only is consumed, and it is shipped from China to Bombay, and thence railed up to Peshawar for the Kabul merchants, and to Quetta for the Kandahar and Herat merchants. From Peshawar to Kabul, and from Quetta to Kandahar it is carried on by camels. A large quantity of tea is imported annually, and only the very poor use the Indian hill tea, as they cannot afford the other, which sells at three shillings to five shillings a pound. I once tried to introduce an Indian green tea into Kabul; but they did not care for its flavour, and the fact of it being Indian tea was sufficient to condemn it in their opinion.

Other articles imported are cotton goods, cloth, silks, and velvets. Of the latter two, large quantities are used by the women, and at one time men and boys dressed a good deal in silks and velvets also; but the new court fashion is black cloth, so the

demand for them is getting less with the men. Saddlery and leather goods, old clothes, sugar, and other household necessaries, are brought up by merchants from India; but the trade in them is very small.

There are no measures in Kabul for grain, liquids, etc., and all things are sold by weight. The weights differ from those used in India, and are built up from the nukhut, a description of pulse about the size of a pea, the weight of each seed of which is fairly equal. Twenty-four of these nukhuts go to a miskal (six and one-sixth miskals nearly equal an ounce); ninety-six miskals equal one pao, which is slightly less than an English pound; sixteen pau equal one seer, and eighty seers equal one kharwar. Excepting in the Government stores there are no exact weights made and used; the people in the bazar taking stones of different sizes and using them as weights, the difference between the stone and the true weight being on the side of the shopkeeper of course. In lineal measure there are two different yards, or guz, as they are called. The one used by surveyors and builders is nearly twenty-eight inches, and the other guz for measuring cloth, etc., is nearly forty-two inches. The kro, or mile, is, as I have already mentioned, an indefinite quantity, but is usually taken to be about one and a half English miles.

The Government offices are controlled and worked by the mirzas, or clerks. The mirza is looked upon

as an educated man in the country, but his education is limited to Persian literature, a smattering of the old Arabic, and the first four rules of arithmetic; but even in these first four rules he is far from proficient, and when it comes to a fraction being included in the calculation, he is hopelessly lost. I was present once when some eight or ten of them together tried to solve a calculation which involved multiplication only, and all of them arrived at different results, while the man who was nearest the correct answer took a good deal of credit to himself for being so nearly right. The mirzas are a class of themselves, although drawn from all classes, and they differ from the rest of the population in their nervous and soft manner, at the back of which, however, is a nature as cruel and heartless as any in the country. It is not the cleverest mirza in his work who comes to the front and has charge of departments, but the one who is cleverest in deceit and intrigue, and it is to excellence in these respects that the young mirza gives attention, when he listens to his elders making up a case, with words and meaning purposely involved, to give them a loophole of escape should their scheme fall through. The mirzas are full of cunning, and difficult for the layman to trap, and they are ever scheming one against the other, or against other people who have money, that they may in one way or another get them in their coils and squeeze them (as they put it).

The work they prize most is taking the accounts of one of themselves, or of some official whom they have already reported to the Amir, as swindling the Government of lakhs of rupees, and undertaking in their report to prove what they say. After reporting such a case, they are generally given the task of proving their accusation, and this necessitates the accused person's accounts being gone through. In doing this they are weighed by no consideration of the figures shown in the books and papers under examination, but search their minds for an idea of some allegation which will involve the accused and be difficult for him to refute, and then, for proof of lesser wrong-doing which will give colour to the greater alleged wrong, they look through the papers, and, as no official is guileless in the conduct of his duties, it is usually easy to get up a few bad-looking cases against him. Then they go into figures, and I have known men accused of swindling more than double the amount which has actually passed through their hands; and to do this without being detected is simpler than it appears, for very few persons besides the mirzas can do more than count up to twenty, and the mirza's papers give the figures and other proofs of the huge sums swindled. Then all of them go before the Amir, together with the papers and other proofs (?), and in the end the accused is put in prison together with his family, and all his money and other property is confiscated. To be correct, not all is confiscated, for a good deal of money has

already gone into the investigating mirza's hands in a vain attempt to induce him to withdraw his charge, or at least reduce his figures; but although the mirza will hold out hopes until he gets the money, he knows that, having begun, he must ruin the man and have him put where he is harmless, or else there will be an ever active enemy lying in wait for him. However, there is always requital, for no one mirza holds any position for long, and a day comes when the intriguer is himself treated in the same way, and is put in prison or killed. Two or three years is the usual limit of a mirza's tenure of high office, for their methods of attracting money to themselves soon lead to exposure by other mirzas who become envious and want the position themselves, in order that they, too, may make something, and have a merry, if a short, life.

In getting up cases, the mirzas do as others do, and pay false witnesses, and this leads at times to the Amir being at a loss to know which side is right, and ordering them all to be tortured with the fanah in order to find out the truth. I saw two mirzas, who were accused of falsifying accounts, being publicly fanah'd in the bazar one day as I rode through; but they were making statements very rapidly with the minimum of pressure on the fanah. Their endurance is less than that of the other men of the country, and this is no doubt due to a sedentary life and incessant smoking, for wherever you see a mirza, there, too, you will see a chillum.

Trades and Commerce

The mirzas have various ways of making money, and one is in the collection of customs duties and various taxes, when they make all they can out of the people who have to pay. If they have to give a receipt to any man for money paid, or goods delivered, they will keep the man waiting all day for it, or even for a few days, if he gives them nothing. The equivalent of a penny is accepted if the man is poor and they see he can give no more. Men coming into Kabul and having to travel two or three days to get there to pay some duty or tax of less than a rupee, have been kept waiting for days because they refused to give the mirza a few annas; so the people see that it saves money to give to the mirzas, and if they complain to a higher authority the mirza and all in his office will swear that the man never came near them. Again, if money has to be paid to a man from the Government treasury he must give some of it to the mirza who pays it out, and this is taken so much for granted that the mirza usually hands it over one or more rupees short, according to the amount of money that has to be paid.

The late Amir used to give salaries to very few of the mirzas employed on Government work. He said they made money from the people whether they got a salary or not, and as the people would not complain to him, they might pay for the mirzas—an economical way of looking at the matter. The Government storekeepers are all mirzas, and

apparently make a good thing out of it, for they wear good clothes, ride good horses, and have many wives and women in their houses, though their pay is seldom more than the equivalent of ten pounds a year. However, as there is no system of stock-taking, and no ones knows what is, or is not, in the stores, it is an easy matter for them to make money out of such a job, but their tenure of office is usually a short one, some one or other of those under them reporting their shortcomings, probably because they were given too small a share of the plunder.

If an Afghan owes money, it is similar to getting blood out of a stone to make him pay it; usually the odds in both cases are equal, unless a considerable amount of pressure can be applied. With many of them it looks as though their hearts were wrung when having to pay up, for it is done with a gloomy countenance and a display of considerable temper, as though they were being robbed by force of hard-earned gains. The method the late Amir inaugurated for the payment of debts was to send soldiers to the house of the debtor for the money, and if it was not at once forthcoming, the soldiers quartered themselves on the man, and partook of the best in the house, and if there was no best in the house, the man was made to get it as quickly as possible, or feel the weight of the butt end of a rifle. Under these circumstances the debtor lost no time in settling up, if only for the sake of getting rid of his unwelcomed guests, who turned the house upside

down, and involved him in the loss of several rupees each day for their food and tobacco. Any person proving a debt could apply to Government for these soldiers, or mahsuls as they are called, and the soldiers employed for the purpose became quite experienced in turning these visits to their own advantage.

There is a colony of Hindoos in Kabul which has been there for many generations. They are the money-lenders to the people, as the Jews used to be in other countries. Also they do almost all the dealing in precious stones and jewellery, and of late years most families have been forced to sell much of the jewellery they possessed, the increased cost of living necessitating it, in order that they should not starve. Whatever a Hindoo offers for an article may be looked upon as being never more than two-thirds of its value, and the people, among themselves, when selling anything to one another, say that the Hindoos offer to give so much for it, and therefore it must be worth the money they themselves ask. Some of the Hindoos are employed in the Treasury offices as being more trustworthy than the mirzas, and also better accountants.

The money of the country is all coined in Kabul, the mint, with its up-to-date coining presses, being situated in the workshops, where the presses are at times kept working day and night when large sums of money are required quickly. When the late Amir, who wanted money badly, saw the revenues yearly

dwindling, he cast about for means to increase it, and one day the idea of doing so in the following way occurred to him. The Kabul rupee used to be an irregularly shaped coin, hand-stamped, but it was made of pure silver, so the Amir had all these rupees collected and melted down as they accumulated, and as they were melted down a fairly high percentage of copper was added. This alloyed silver was then cast into bars, rolled, and coined afresh in the new mint, which turns out a rupee with a milled edge and pressed with nicely engraved dies. In this way, by melting down the old pure silver rupees and adding copper before re-coining, the Amir made a considerable amount of profit, and when the old rupees of his own country were finished, he collected Persian rupees and added copper to those; but, unfortunately, under one of the Shahs, the same thing had already been done, so that many of the Afghan rupees contain more than double the proportion of copper than is usual in the standard coinage of other countries. Thereafter the Amir ordered the collection of those Persian rupees which were coined under other Shahs, and the exchange offered for these rupees in the Kabul treasury was one Persian for one Kabuli rupee; but to make still further profit, the Amir ordered that one pice less than a Kabuli rupee should be given in exchange for each Persian one, and the Shah, on hearing this, ordered a like reduction in exchange on all Afghan money brought into his country. The result of adding an unusual amount of

copper to the rupee, together with other causes, however, depreciated its value in India, where five Kabuli rupees used to be taken in exchange for four Indian, and the exchange nowadays is two Kabuli for one Indian.

CHAPTER XV

GEOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF THE COUNTRY

Kabul valley once crater of volcano—Earthquakes—Kabul once a large lake—Mines outcropping, gold, lead, copper, coal, etc.—Rivers, and gold in them—Existence of kept secret for fear of trouble—Turkestan mines—The question of fuel for Kabul workshops—Local supply exhausted—Coal under the valley of Kabul.

It is probable that the Valley of Kabul is the crater of an ancient volcano, for, in addition to other indications, there are in many places in the surrounding hills traces of volcanic action to be seen in the way of lava cones. At many places, also, are large beds of mingled lava and small stones, which have the appearance of extensive concrete blocks, and they might readily be mistaken for them. Several of these beds are many hundred yards in length and breadth, and they mostly lie at the foot of a hill, where they look like the foundations of a large fort or palace, from which the superstructure has crumbled and disappeared, and the rain of centuries has washed away the surrounding earth and left only the concrete beds to mark the spot where they stood. It seems likely that the molten lava flowing down the adjoining hillside picked up small stones in its progress, and on

reaching the level ground below spread itself out over the land and cooled down into a solid block.

The strata of the ground surrounding Kabul is in a very disturbed condition, some of the hills and mountains about showing the strata standing perpendicularly, as though the earth of a flat country had been lifted bodily and thrown up on end, as, no doubt, it had been.

Earthquakes are of very common occurrence, and usually the greater number and those of most violence occur in October or November. The one which was worse than all others that I experienced there happened at the end of December, and as the walls of the Kabul houses are built of mud bricks, with very heavy roofs superimposed, many houses were brought down by the shock, and several people killed through the walls and roofs falling on them. Preceding this earthquake a violent storm of wind arose, which broke off large branches from the trees and threatened to beat the windows in, and when the wind had been raging for an hour or so, the earthquake commenced. It came on about ten o'clock at night, and at the time it commenced I was standing before one of the windows of the guest house, which is fortunately solidly built, and when the shaking and rattling of the windows began, I thought it was due to the wind, and remarked to the others in the room that if it continued in violence the windows would soon be blown in; but while I was speaking the floor started swinging from side to side, and then I made a dash for the doorway,

and stood there until the disturbance ceased. The doorways are safer than other places in a house during an earthquake, as, should the roof fall in, one stands a chance of escaping unhurt. It is difficult to judge the length of time an earthquake lasts, for one is more interested in the probabilities attending it, but it seemed four or five minutes before the tremors finally ceased, and then I saw that large cracks had been formed down the walls of the room, although they are five or six feet thick, and the next day I heard of different houses completely thrown down and the people in them killed.

The late Amir, who was ill with gout at the time, was sitting in durbar, and as soon as the earthquake commenced, all those with him ran out at once and left him sitting there, unable to move. With his constitutional dread of earthquakes, his feelings, when he found himself deserted, may be imagined; but he was not left for long, for three or four of the slave-boys rushed back as soon as the violence began to subside, and carried him out into the garden. The shock, however, affected the Amir so much that, as a thanksgiving for his escape from harm, on the following day he ordered three to four hundred prisoners to be released. My Hindustani servants were asleep in their room when the disturbance started, and, roused from sleep by the violence of the shaking, and not knowing the cause, for this was their first experience of an earthquake, they rushed out into the open, lightly clad as they were, and,

sinking on their knees in the snow, prayed aloud to be protected from the calamity that was upon them, and they were down with fever the next day, the result of exposure and nervous shock.

In Kohistan, close to Kabul, earthquakes of such violence occur at times that the mangers for feeding horses are thrown down. These mangers, which are built of stone and mud, stand some three feet high only, and are fairly thick, so that the shaking of the earth may be imagined when such are overthrown. In 1899 the fortune-tellers prophesied that in the month which corresponded to November of that year many earthquakes would be experienced, and the last earthquake of all would happen on a certain day, which they specified, and would be of such violence that all Kabul would be demolished. Strangely enough, towards the end of that month earthquakes were of continued occurrence for about two weeks, and not a day passed without at least one shock being felt, and on some days there were many, both during the day and night. Although earthquakes are usual towards the end of the year, a prolonged continuation was very exceptional, and the fortune-tellers' prediction affected the people to such extent that those who had tents pitched them on the ground outside the city walls, and lived in them, for they fully believed that as the prophecy was in part fulfilled, the rest of it would come about also, and that it was foolish to live in a house that was appointed to fall on a certain day, and in its fall would crush them. The Amir,

however, who had consulted his own fortune-tellers, gave orders that any person found living in a tent outside the city on the day following his proclamation would be imprisoned, so all of them had perforce to return to their houses. But, in spite of the Amir's assurance, the appointed day for the overthrowing of Kabul was passed in fear and trembling by the majority of the people, which was not allayed by the day commencing with one huge shock, which made the whole city tremble. However, no further shocks happened, and that was the last one felt for several months.

Some of the earthquakes which occurred from time to time were of the nature of a single bump, while others were of a rumbling and shaking character. I have noticed that the latter sort, which on one or two occasions occurred at night when all was quiet, and I was lying in bed before falling asleep, could be heard coming before they could be felt under the house to make it shake, and could also be heard pass on, travelling from the south-west towards the north-east. These earthquakes resembled a very heavy drag driven along a bumpy underground road, which, as it passed immediately underneath, made the house vibrate, and then could be heard passing on until lost in the distance.

The subsoil indications show that the valley of Kabul was at one time a large lake, and that the valley was not once, but many times submerged, and it is said

by the people a story has been handed down to them that where Kabul is now was once a great lake of many miles in circumference. It is probable that at the point where the river flows through a cleft in the mountains which surround Kabul on its way down to India, landslips occurred at times, which blocked up the outlet of the river, and caused the water to rise until all the surrounding country was submerged, and the water went on rising until it was so high that the dam caused by the landslip was unable to hold it back, and then the obstacle would be swept away, and the valley drained of its water, and remain dry until another landslip blocked the river's progress once again. From the appearance of the sub-strata when making excavations, I concluded that there had been many inundations, and the thicknesses of the different deposits superimposed one on the other, showed the floods to have lasted for varying periods of time. On the mountain sides around Kabul there are also rocks and boulders which have the appearance of being water-washed, and in some places the under-part of rocky cliffs are holed through and worn smooth by the action of water, similar to cliffs on the seashore, and as some of these appear at very high levels, it would lead one to suppose that the Kabul valley was at one time of much greater extent, and subterranean disturbances subsequently threw up high some of those portions of the land which were formerly under water. The rocks on the Asman Heights, past which

the river flows, are water-marked and worn up to some fifty yards above the level of the river, which is probably the height to which some of the floods rose.

In the mountains near Khurd Kabul, about thirty miles from Kabul, thin seams of new coal have been found outcropping. There are several seams deposited one on the other, and they vary in thickness from a sixteenth of an inch to eight or nine inches, and are separated by thin layers of clay, the thicker seams of coal being lower than the thinner ones. In some cases three inches in thickness of the strata show about twelve different deposits of carbonaceous matter, and point to various short periods of inundation following in rapid succession.

Throughout Afghanistan the strata are in a most disturbed condition, and in innumerable places veins of ore, which are rich in metal, are found outcropping on the mountain sides. Ores of copper, lead, silver, zinc, tin, nickel, etc., are numerous. Gold is found in the sand of several of the northern rivers, and it is said the river Oxus is rich in it too. Gold-bearing quartz was found within a couple of miles of Kandahar, but it has been exhausted. Samples which have been kept of the gold embedded in a matrix of quartz show the mine to have been a rich one, and it is said that large quantities of gold were obtained from it by former Amirs. Many of the copper ores sent me to assay were very rich in metal, and samples containing thirty to forty per cent. of copper were common, and there were others with about sixty per

cent. of metal, while in some of the veins of ore native copper was present. Lead ores of over seventy per cent. of metal are worked to obtain the required quantity of lead for bullet-moulding, and one lead ore which was sent me for assay contained a little over ten per cent. of silver. In the Sher Darwaza Heights is a vein of copper ore which runs throughout its length, outcropping here and there, but it is a thin seam and rather poor in metal, as compared with other ores round about, but the percentage is enough to pay handsomely for its working. In other parts of the mountains round Kabul, however, are veins of copper ore of sufficient extent and richness to supply the requirements of Europe for several years, and if the country was thoroughly prospected, it is probable that the existence of still further deposits would be revealed.

The people of the country are very chary of giving information of the existence of ores in their locality, fearing that if such are known to exist, the Amir will have the mines worked, and then the people of the neighbourhood will be pressed to labour on them, and as that means taking them away from their fields and crops to work hard and long on a small pay, the prospect does not appeal to them. Should the Amir decide to take advantage of the mineral wealth of his country, this is what would happen, no doubt; but, for some unknown reason, the Amir prefers that these mines, of the richness of which he is cognisant, should remain unworked; and

yet he appointed several sappers and miners to prospect the whole of the country and bring in samples of all rocks, etc., which had the appearance of being of value and were different in colour and weight to the common rocks and earth; and these men were placed under me, and I had orders to go over the samples they brought in and assay and report on those which contained metals. From this I gathered the impression that the Amir eventually intended working the mines, but up to the time I left the country nothing had been said or done to this end. The lead ores are worked for the use of the Government, and the Amir has proved that his people are sufficiently intelligent to learn and carry out any work taught them, and he had sufficient confidence in my report on ores to send the lead-smelting men to work on another ore which I recommended when that of the old working ran out, so that it is difficult to understand why the exploitation of the mines is not put in hand; but I have sometimes thought that the Amir perhaps fears the cupidity of his powerful neighbours, should he by working the mines of his country give practical evidence of its richness, and thereby lose it.

The people of Turkestan, when speaking of the richness of their country in mineral wealth, claim that it is much more wealthy than the rest of Afghanistan, but no ores from that country were sent to me for assay. One Turkistani chief brought with him, when on a visit to the Amir, an ore which

he said contained gold, but it turned out to be iron pyrites. This chief is not the only man who has made that mistake, for ores of iron pyrites exemplify the old saying that all is not gold that glitters. At Durrah-i-Yusef, in Turkestan, a seam of coal outcrops in the valley, but it is new coal or lignite. The seam has been described to me as some six feet in thickness, and of considerable extent. There are many uses to which this coal could be put, and several tons of it were brought to Kabul to try as fuel in the boiler-house instead of wood, and the experiment was successful; but the cost of carrying the coal by camels over the intervening ranges of mountains, a three weeks' journey, was prohibitive.

The question of obtaining fuel for the boilers in the Kabul workshops has lately become of urgent importance, for the trees of the country up to several days' journey from Kabul have been used up, and further fuel is barely obtainable, while the young trees which have been planted in places for a future supply of fuel will not be ready for cutting for eight years or more to come. In an effort to remedy matters, the present Amir, a year or so ago, issued a proclamation offering a large reward to any one finding coal near to Kabul. The reward was to be thirty thousand rupees for coal found within five miles of the city, twenty thousand rupees within ten miles, ten thousand within twenty miles, and so on. But there was one stipulation, and that was, that the coal found should be so located that a road

could be constructed up to within a mile of the mine for wheeled traffic, otherwise the amount of reward would be reduced in proportion to the distance from the mine to which carts could be brought. The proclamation resulted in the country for many miles around being very thoroughly prospected by the people, and although very few of them had ever seen coal, they eventually found thin seams outcropping in several places, which evidently belonged to one original bed or field of coal before subterranean disturbances dislocated the sub-strata around. I was sent to inspect and report on these outcrops, and found that it was new coal in such thin seams that the yield would not repay the cost of working, and borings failed to reveal the existence of thicker seams within easy reach below. A gang of my men, who were appointed to search further afield, found thick seams of new coal at Sheikh Ali, some six days' journey from Kabul towards Hazara, and further outcrops were discovered at other places on the same range of mountains; but in this case also the intervening mountains made the cost of camel transport far too expensive for the Government to take advantage of the find, and the Amir is strongly prejudiced against anything in the way of tram or light railways, which would be the only way of carrying coal thence cheaply.

It is more than probable that the Kabul workshops will have to close soon for want of fuel to keep the machines running, and the Amir told me,

shortly before I left Kabul, that the local supply of wood is exhausted, and that there is little likelihood of coal being found near enough to be of value. The last winter I spent in Kabul, wood was so scarce that it realized three times the price of five years before, and there was very little to be had even at that price.

From the indications given, it seems probable that good coal lies under the valley of Kabul; but the late Amir pronounced the coal-boring work I commenced as mad-headed, and wanted to know what was the advantage of making known the existence of coal many hundred feet below the surface, for who could get coal from the bowels of the earth, which were full of water, as the wells about proved. This he said in durbar, and not to me, so I had no chance of vindicating my action in the matter. To me he simply wrote that he wished the men who were employed on that work to be sent about the country to see if coal could not be found on the hillside, as it was in Turkestan; and it was not my duty to dispute a definite order, nor was the Amir the kind of man to listen had I done so, for he would never acknowledge himself in the wrong after forming an opinion.

CHAPTER XVI

RELIGION

Suni and Shiah—Moullahs and their influence on the people—Jihads or holy wars—The Koran—Late Amir's distrust of Moullahs—Holy men, fakirs, and holy graves—Madmen and reverence paid them as God-stricken—Sayid and Hafiz—Beggars and alms—Stoning to death for religous offences—Prayers—Punishments for not knowing prayers—Musjids—Ramazan and fastings—Haj—Afghan colony in Australia—Lawful and unlawful food—Plurality of wives.

THE religion of the Afghans is the Mussulman, or Mahomedan religion, as it is more generally called in Christian countries, and if the people were to act up to the tenets of their religion, as taught by the Koran, then a good Mussulman would be a good man, for it is as a rule the people who practice a religion who bring credit or discredit on it. There are two sects of this religion in the country, the Shiah and the Suni. The latter sect includes the royal family and the bulk of the people, while the Shiah sect is chiefly composed of the Kuzilbash people, who are the descendants of Persians. These Kuzilbash live in the south-west portion of Kabul, called Chindawal, and form a small colony of their own; but a great number of them live in Kandahar and Herat, and near the Persian

frontier. The difference between these two sects appears to be more in form of ritual than in any real difference in belief; but there is, however, a great deal of ill-feeling between them, and this leads at times to much bloodshed, much as it used to in days gone by between those of the Roman Church and Protestants.

The moullahs, or priests, are those who are brought up in the musjids, and who understand the Koran, or at least can read it in the old Arabic, in which language only is it allowed to be written. They live a holy life of constant prayer combined with a good deal of fasting, and their beads, similar to the rosary beads, are always in their hands. While walking or sitting, or even carrying on a conversation, these beads are rapidly slipped between the finger and thumb as they repeat the name of God for each bead so handled. The sight of a kafar, and all who are not Mussulman are infidels, is so obnoxious that they spit on the ground when passing him in the street, and to kill one of them is quite a meritorious action in their eyes. The majority of the people are equally fanatical, and they also consider it no sin to lie to or swindle a kafar.

The influence the moullahs exert over the people is very great, and they have little trouble in getting them to join in the Jihad or holy war against the enemies of their religion. They argue that the enemy of their religion is the enemy of God and therefore a loathsome thing, and that the Koran

commands them to kill all such, and promises that if they are themselves killed in doing so, they shall go straight to Paradise, and that the man who fails to kill a kafar, but suffers death himself in the attempt, has only a little less rank in heaven than the one who succeeds.

The moullahs also teach that in Paradise good Mussulmans shall lie in the shade of gold and silver-leafed trees, whose fruits are precious stones, with beautiful houri around attending to all their desires, and with rivers of milk and honey flowing past them; and in this Paradise, if they desire one of the many beautiful birds which sit singing in the trees about, it is instantly placed ready cooked before them, and when they have eaten, the bird will assume its former shape and fly back to the branches above, for there is no taking of life in Paradise. There is enough in this picture of future happiness to fire the desire of the average Afghan, for his life is generally one long struggle for existence.

The Koran is always kept and handled very reverently, and when not in use it is wrapped in several cloths, and the person who intends reading it washes his hands before taking it out of its wrappings. The Koran is written in Arabic only, and when I wondered why it was not translated by competent moullahs into Persian, so that all who could read might understand, I was told that the language of the Koran was such that no one could copy or imitate it, and therefore any translation

must necessarily be full of errors, and the word of God violated. For this reason also, those who read it are taught to pronounce each word exactly, for the short vowels are not written in Arabic, and it would be easy for a beginner to wrongly pronounce a word, because there are many words which are similarly written and differ only in the pronunciation of the unwritten short vowels, and therefore the meaning would become confused, and they say that there is no greater sin than misconstruing the words inspired by God. Very few, with the exception of the moullahs, can read the Koran, and the latter apparently give very free translations when it suits their purpose; such, for instance, as that of killing unbelievers, on which is built up the principles of Jihad, holy war, and which the Amir has had printed in pamphlet form and distributed throughout the country of late. I have been assured by Mussulmans of other countries that the meaning of the Koran has been twisted in this, for true Mussulmans are exhorted in the Koran to live with unbelievers for neighbours in such manner that all may know them for good and upright men, and when the time comes to fight against them, then to fight to the utmost of their power.

The late Amir, who distrusted the moullahs, as he had reason to do, for on more than one occasion they caused the people to rise against him by proclaiming that he did not act up to his religion and was therefore a kafar, always treated them in such

manner as to lower them in the eyes of the people rather than give them honour and uphold their influence; and he did not fail to punish them as he did the rest of the people when they deserved it. One such case was when the moullahs of a holy shrine wrote him a petition praying for money to repair the walls and rooms of the tomb, which were in a dilapidated condition. A holy grave is usually surrounded by a building, in the rooms of which the priests who guard the tomb live. The Amir knew that this place, in common with others, was much visited by women ostensibly for prayer, but in reality to keep assignations made with lovers, and that many had lovers among the moullahs themselves. A woman's prayers usually have her own fruitfulness for objective, and they are supposed to have greater virtue at a holy shrine, and, under the circumstances, it is possible that results in some cases were such as to encourage this supposition. The Amir accordingly sent for the moullahs, who were sleek and well-fed men, and told them that he knew of their iniquities, and, cursing them, ordered the place to be closed and the moullahs dispersed.

The present Amir, who has not yet the self-reliance of his father, treats all moullahs with great honour, and when he became Amir he sent for them all and gave them money and robes of honour, and otherwise treated them with distinction. It was no doubt politic to do so, for the time was critical; but they are a rather double-edged weapon, and he may

find that they can cut both ways should he ever offend them.

There are many holy men and fakirs in the country, who are honoured by the people and treated with great consideration. They are credited with the power of curing sickness by reciting some part of the Koran over those who are ill, or by breathing on the water given them to drink; but more usually they write a verse of the Koran on a piece of paper and give it to the sick person to swallow. Holy graves are also supposed to cast out sickness, simply by the person living at the grave until cured, and one of my servants tried this remedy rather than take English medicine, but died there on the third day.

Lunatics are said to be God-afflicted, and no one therefore attempts to control their actions or in any way interfere with them. They are treated instead with great deference, and are asked for their prayers and advice in any difficulty or trouble. Offerings of food and money are taken them, and they are allowed to go where they will, and no one will stop them even if they wander into the Amir's durbar. One such, who was known and reverenced all over Kabul, used to go about with nothing on but a long shirt, and this was open in front and exposed the chest, and in the depths of winter a posteen only was worn over the shirt. I have seen this man on the coldest days lying asleep on the bare ground in the open, bare-headed and barefooted. The man's constitution

who can stand such privation and live must be an exceptional one. He used sometimes to go to the Government stores, which were guarded by sepoys, and, breaking the padlock from a door, would walk in and lie down there, and no one dared to interfere with him; and he would also wander occasionally into the late Amir's durbar and give expression to his opinion of the Amir's character, which is a thing no other man could have done and lived to boast of. When the Amir gave him money he threw it broadcast from him, and refused to be propitiated, and he would at times do this with the food and presents sent him by other people. He had many followers, of course, and these waxed fat on the good things sent their chief, and they copied his ways too, and tried to perfect themselves in them so that they might also receive honour, and perhaps, when the day came, step into their master's shoes, and live free from the trials and worries governing other people.

There are many Sayids in the country; a Sayid is said to be a lineal descendant of the prophet, and they are looked upon as people of consequence, and are respected by others, but this does not prevent them having to work for their living. Several worked under me, and I found them superior to the bulk of the men I came in contact with, and generally more intelligent, which was, perhaps, the outcome of generations of trying to be superior to others.

Religion

A Hafiz is one of those who can recite the whole of the Koran by heart, and they are employed during Ramazan, the month of fasting, to recite a portion of it each evening in the musjids until the Koran is ended. It takes many days to do this, and the recital is so apportioned at times as to make it last until the end of the fast.

The fakirs, or holy mendicants, are a great institution in the country, as they are indeed throughout the East. They (men, women, and children) profess to do no work, but beg for the day's requirements. They also profess to take no heed for the morrow, and to make a point of keeping nothing which is given them for the next day, but to expend all they receive from the charitable the same day that they receive it. They may be seen on the sides of the roads and bazars with their wooden or copper begging bowls, suspended by a string round the neck and hanging in front of them, continuously calling out to the passers-by for charity. Winter and summer they sit in the same place all day, but in winter they have a small iron bowl under their posteens, in which a little lighted charcoal is kept in order to keep them warm. The present Amir is much against the mode of life of these people, and he has those boys whom he sees upon the road begging, caught and taken to the workshops, where they are ordered to work, and receive food twice a day and clothes once a year in lieu of pay. They are practically kept prisoners in the workshops, for they are not allowed to go out day or night. So

far as benefit to the Government is concerned, they are useless, for they do nothing but play about and idle all day. Coercion has no effect on them, and many of the ustads in the shops who tried to get work out of them, gave them up at last as hopeless, and from what I saw of them, they did nothing but spoil good material when their masters forced them to do anything, and as they did this with even the simplest sort of work, it was easy to see that they hoped by these means to be eventually sent away as useless.

Religious crimes and offences are tried by a jury of moullahs, under an appointed head, who is chosen from among themselves. For a capital religious offence the moullahs can order a person to be stoned to death, but the sentence must be ratified by the Amir. When the punishment is to be carried out, the condemned man, with hands tied behind him and chains upon his legs, is led along the streets of the city, some of the moullahs following, and at an appointed place the first stone is thrown by the chief moullah among them. The populace, who have joined the throng, and arm themselves with missiles as they go along, wait until the moullah throws the first stone, and then they commence throwing too. The condemned man is forced on by the shower of stones, which takes more and more effect on him as it is continued, for the incessant impact of stones gradually weakens him with pain, until a place called Siyah Sang is reached. This is a small hill of black rock, about two miles out of the city, surrounded by a stony tract of ground,

and here larger stones are selected and thrown, so that soon the man is staggering forward feebly, knowing that where he falls his life will be ended, and trying to keep on a little longer. Eventually he can bear no more, or a stone larger than others brings him to his knees and he falls full length, and then the hail of missiles increases, some taking small boulders they can barely lift and heaving them on the man's body, and so it continues until a mould is piled up over him, and there he is left, hidden by the heap of stones. Death does not always occur at once, although a man become unconscious when he falls, and cases have been known of a man living for some hours after, and dying at last in great agony.

The people are looked after by the moullahs, who see that they keep to their religion, and examine them periodically to see if they know their prayers; and for this purpose a party of them are appointed by the chief moullah to make occasional excursions into the bazars and workshops and to the public gardens about. On these occasions each man they come across is made to repeat his prayers, and if he says them correctly he is allowed to go his way, and his way is usually in the track of the moullahs, where he helps to swell the mob by which they are followed, for all those who pass the ordeal like to see what happens to the next man. The man who makes a mistake in his prayers, or has forgotten part of them, is beaten with sticks; but if the case is a bad one, and the man does not know

his prayers at all, or those who owe him a grudge come forward and testify to his not saying them the stipulated number of times each day, then he is seized, and, with his face blackened and hands tied behind his back, is placed backwards on a donkey, which is led by moullahs through the principal bazars of the city, with, of course, a large crowd of men following and making rude jokes at his expense. The shame and disgrace of this proceeding is said to have such a lasting effect on the man as to ensure the due performance of religious observances in the future, and his friends and relations for years after ungenerously twit and joke him about it. I once saw a man, who was vigorously and arrogantly expressing his opinion on some subject, interrupted quietly by one of those present to be asked if he knew his prayers yet; the poor fellow collapsed, tried to brave it out for a little while, and then made a rapid exit, followed by the jeering laughter of his companions. Most of the Afghans are very susceptible to ridicule, and too much of it is apt to rouse their worst passions.

All good Mussulmans are supposed to pray five times a day, but before doing so they must wash their hands and feet, that they shall present themselves for prayer before God in a becoming manner. I was told that the reason wines and spirits are forbidden in the Koran is, that a man under the influence of drink does not fully comprehend what

he does or says, and therefore his prayers, while in that condition, would be a sacrilege.

The musjids in Kabul are mostly small ones, and are usually constructed so that three sides are enclosed and the fourth side left open, and they are built in such position that the direction of their length points to Mecca, in which is the tomb of the Prophet, for it is in the direction of Mecca that all Mussulmans face while saying their prayers. One very large musjid, called the Jumah Musjid, was built by the late Amir, who issued a proclamation that all those who were good Mussulmans must bring at least one stone from the mountains to be used in its construction as their share of the work. A large quantity of stone was collected in this way, but the size of the building necessitated the use of carts and coolies to complete the quantity of materials required. It is in this mosque that the people congregate for prayers on festivals, and twenty to thirty thousand are present at times, so that the musjid, and the grounds surrounding it, are filled with men standing, kneeling, and genuflecting all together in long rows, one behind the other. Here, too, they congregate for prayer when cholera or other calamity visits Kabul and makes a long stay, hoping that their united supplication will have the effect of averting the calamity.

The month of Ramazan, or fast, entails fasting on all people from sunrise to sunset for thirty days. Nothing whatever must pass the lips during this time, and no one may take snuff or smoke. Very

young children, and those who are seriously ill, are exempt, but in the latter case it often happens that a sick person who is unable to bear the ordeal will insist upon fasting, and so dies from exhaustion. The sick person, however, who does not observe the fast must provide a substitute to do so, and pay the substitute for such service, and he must also feed a number of the poor according to his means, and a moullah must certify that the person's condition is such that he is, by religious law, exempt from fasting. After sunset until the sun rises again the people may eat anything they desire, and they are not limited to quantity. It is usual for a big gun to be fired at sunset as a signal to the people that the day's fast is over, and many of them have food or their pipes ready to hand, awaiting the signal which allows them to break their fast or take a pull at the pipe, for which the day's abstinence has created so keen a desire. An hour or so before sunrise another gun is fired to warn those people who have to work the following day that they must wake and eat while there is yet time to fit themselves to bear the next day's fast. The common practice for those who are able to do it is to turn night into day and sleep during the daytime, and eat and work at night. In the Government offices and factories the working hours are shortened, and men commence work late in the day and finish early. During the first part of the month the men seem to bear their fasting cheerfully, but afterwards the effect of long abstinence

during the day, followed by a surfeit of food begins to tell in the way of indigestion and dyspepsia, and tempers get short and quarrels become frequent. Many people get very ill, and not a few die, for more is eaten during the month of fast than any other month, and the people save up all they can against the time, when, after being deprived for hours of all they desire, they can at last eat, drink, and smoke to satiety, and a heavy meal on a stomach which has long been empty is not conducive to good digestion. Those who are heavy smokers, or in the habit of taking snuff, are those who feel the abstinence most, and to them the time seems to pass more slowly than it does to others. Many men have confessed to me how weary are the hours until the gun announces sunset, and I think all smokers will sympathize with them. The mirzas (clerks) are among those who miss their pipe and snuff most, for they are, almost without exception, inveterate smokers. The Mussulman year is reckoned according to the lunar months, and the month of fasting, therefore, comes at an earlier date each year; and when it comes in the summer-time, when the days are long and the weather hot, thirst has to be added to the other discomforts, and, as almost all people in Kabul are in the habit of drinking water frequently during the day, the desire to relieve their thirst becomes almost unbearable, and they say it is the worst suffering of all during the fast.

Six weeks following the Eid of Ramazan, the day of festival which concludes the month of fast, is the

great Eid-i-Kurban, or Feast of Sacrifices, and on this day all men, no matter how poor, see that they have new clothes to put on; and should a man be so poor that he cannot do so, he spends the day alone in his house, unable to face his friends, shamed and miserable. It is rare, however, that a man is so situated, for it is the custom to make provision against this day, and, at the worst, old clothes can be mended and cleaned, and made to look good enough to pass muster, for it is not all who can afford to buy clothes first-hand. On this festival, after the prayers in the great musjid which the Amir and princes, together with their officials and the officers of the army attend, a review of troops is held on the large plain facing the mosque. The arrival of the Amir with his suite on the review-ground is greeted with a salvo of forty guns, and the review proceeds; but as it simply consists of the Amir riding past all the regiments drawn up there, and making them a short speech, it is soon ended, and then the regiments are marched back to their barracks, while the roads *en route* are crowded with people to watch the tamasha, not the least of which is the passing by of the Amir with his retinue and bodyguard, and preceded by the State elephants decked with gaudy trappings. The people afterwards spend the day in visiting their friends and wishing the compliments of the season to each other; and as it is customary for those visited to offer their guests tea and refreshments on such occasions, the cost of doing so is a heavy tax on most

of them; but it must be done if a man wishes to retain his respect among his fellows, even though he gets into debt thereby.

On Shab-i-barat, a festival similar to our All Souls, fireworks in the evening are the order of the day, and men invite their friends to have food with them, and afterwards witness the firework display, and this is followed in the wealthier houses by music and dancing-girls, when the entertainment is kept up until a late hour at night. When a man invites another to dinner in the evening, it is understood that the guest shall stop the night, and, as it is only on special occasions that guests are invited, the proceedings are always kept up until late. On the night of Shab-i-barat it is believed by the people that the souls in purgatory are visited by angels in order that their papers may be examined to see how much longer they are to stop there, and to release those whose time is up and take them to Paradise.

Pilgrimages to Mecca, or the Haj, as it is called, are undertaken by those who are religiously inclined, and can afford the time and expense incurred. To the Afghan the Haj is a great undertaking, and the chances of return from so perilous a journey are looked upon as very small, so those who undertake the pilgrimage do so more or less convinced that they will never return, and therefore make their wills and settle up their affairs in the same manner as they would do so on the approach of death; for foreign countries inhabited by enemies of their religion and

therefore of themselves have to be traversed, and should they get through this ordeal safely, there is still the sea with its storms and other perils to be faced. They have many queer legends of the sea and its inhabitants, some of which will swallow up a ship when they come across it; and a man needs to be thoroughly infatuated with the desire to undertake the holy pilgrimage before he would dare face all the terrors and dangers which have to be encountered. When, however, after safely passing through the perils of the journey, the pilgrim finally returns, entitled to the distinction of being called "Hadjee" for the rest of his days, his friends and relations make much fuss and rejoicing over his return, and for many months after he does little else but relate his travels and adventures, and the sights he has seen, to an eager crowd of listeners, who never seem to weary of hearing all that there is to be told them. I have heard some of them relate their experiences, and I must say their stories do not lose in the telling.

The Afghans are not great travellers, for their rulers do not offer facilities for them to visit other lands, nor do they encourage strangers in the country. They prefer instead to keep the people isolated, and out of touch with the rest of the world, and are fearful that knowledge and enlightenment would lessen their hold on their subjects, who would be less easily swayed in the direction they wished when invoked in the name of their religion were they

conversant with the laws and customs of the people of other countries, and could thereby draw comparisons for themselves.

In Western Australia, however, is a small community of Afghans who had been many years in the colony, and do a trade in camel transport across the sandy desert tracts there. One of these returned to Afghanistan a few years ago, bringing with him his English, or rather Australian, wife who had embraced his own religion. She was uneducated, and could not read or write, and from what she said about the visions she had, and voices she heard exhorting her to persevere in the practice of her new religion, one would imagine that her mind was rather unhinged. The man had returned to his own country, wishing to see it again after thirty years' absence and to be buried in the land of his fathers, and he brought back a small fortune with him; but his relations in Kandahar had borrowed so much and so frequently that he had but little left, and for this reason he had to leave his own place and come to Kabul to see what the Amir would do for him. He lived in a very small house with but one servant, and his wife was allowed a small sum yearly from the Government, and that was all they had to live on. He was very grateful to me for the pipe and occasional presents of tobacco I gave him, and often lamented his want of sense in leaving Australia, where he had all that made life pleasant, but to which he was unable to return. He spoke English

like an Australian, and his language was interlarded with oaths which sounded queerly from the lips of a typical Afghan. He died some two years after his return from heart disease; and the cholera, which broke out a few weeks later, carried off his wife amongst other victims, and before she died, one of his nephews was doing all he could to get her to marry him that he might share in her pension.

The Afghan colony in Australia wrote a letter of congratulation to the late Amir on the occasion of his receiving the title of "Light of faith and religion," and sent him at the same time a copy of the Australian Government's order forbidding the immigration of Orientals into the country unless each one paid a rather heavy poll-tax, and they asked his help and influence with the Indian Government to have Afghans made exempt from this tax. The Amir, who always had an eye to business and knew that the colonists were wealthy, replied asking three or four of their headmen to visit him in order to discuss the matter; but the headmen were loth to enter the lion's den, fearing, probably, that they might not get out of it again, and they therefore let the matter drop.

Among the Afghans birds and animals are broadly divided into two classes, "halal" and "haram," *i.e.* those which may be eaten and which may not, and, generally speaking, the bird or beast which lives on meat or carrion is unlawful to eat. Those which are intended for food are killed by having the throat cut,

and while this is being done the name of God must be repeated, for otherwise the flesh is haram and sinful to eat. If a bird is shot, the Mussulman who fires the gun repeats the name of God as he shoots—so that if it is shot dead it may be made lawful eating. When I was out shooting myself, the men with me would cut the throats of any bird dropped, repeating meanwhile the prescribed formula, provided it had the faintest spark of life left in it, and so make it "halal," but if the bird was dead when picked up no one would eat it. If a dog or other "haram" beast touches any food with its mouth, the food is defiled and cannot be eaten, but if it is seen that the animal touches only one part of it, that portion may be cut away and the remainder eaten. Although dogs are looked upon as unclean beasts, they may be handled without defilement, provided the dog's mouth is not touched, or does not touch the person who is handling it; but should the hands or clothes come in contact with its mouth, the part defiled must be washed.

Some of the soldiers and poor people, however, who keep dogs and make great pets of them do not seem to fear defilement, and in some cases the pet dog sleeps on the same bed as its master, and is treated with every kindness. These men are fond of teaching their dogs to do tricks, and one pet, which was the property of a sepoy, would feign death, and beg, and walk on its hind legs, and take a handkerchief with a copper in it to the tobacco shop in the

bazar and bring back the tobacco, and do various other tricks. This dog was also trained to carry in its mouth a short stick, from the ends of which two small lanterns were suspended, and run at night to light the way in front of its master.

The people repeat the name of God in all other things they do besides making flesh lawful. The workmen before commencing any work, or starting a new machine, or pouring molten metal into a mould, say the name of God that a blessing may attend the work and make it successful. They do the same before and after eating, and when naming a child, first they call the name of God in its ear, and then the one the child is to be known by.

When the wife of an official presents him with a child, he takes a present of sweetmeats to the Amir and informs him of the fact, and then asks him to choose the name that is to be given it. It is customary for the Amir to name the children of the officials and those round him, excepting when a female child is born, for then the Queen-Sultana chooses the name. On the birth of a son the Amir gives presents to the father if he happens to be in favour, or if he wishes to do him honour, for the birth of a son is a matter for rejoicing. In the case of a girl, the birth is passed over in silence, for women are of small account in Afghanistan, and sometimes the father will not go near the mother for several days when a daughter is born, in order to show his displeasure and mark his resentment for the

woman not better acting up to his desires and wishes.

When one of the Amir's wives is expected to give birth to a child, preparations are made for the firing of guns and fireworks, and the feasting of all and sundry, in case it is a boy that comes into the world, but if it turns out to be a girl nothing in the way of rejoicing happens, and the mother is left to weep alone in the disappointment of her hopes; for all women desire and pray for a man child, because then the father will visit her, and she is made much of, and everybody else fusses over and congratulates her, so that she enjoys a small triumph.

Plurality of wives is general among the Afghans. There are some with one wife only; but that is either because they can afford no more, or else the wife is decidedly the "better half," and resents the bringing of other women into the house. I have been told that in all harems there is a never-ending struggle for supremacy among the different wives, and that is why charms and love potions and other magic arts are resorted to by a woman in an endeavour to concentrate the love of the man on herself; and this fight for supremacy, together with jealousy, is one of the chief reasons why poisons which cannot be detected are in request. I have myself been asked if I knew of and could obtain a poison which resembled any ordinary disease in its effect, and once also I was asked for a charm or spell which would ensure one being loved, but I had

neither of these things, although I was offered a large amount of money for them. A West End witch would no doubt be able to get together a large *clientèle* in Kabul and do a good business. The Koran is quoted as the authority for a man having several wives; but there are some, and they claim to know the Koran, who say it is written that a man may marry up to four wives *if he can love all equally*, and, as this is impossible, it really means that one wife is ordered. The prophet is said to have had more than one wife; but in his case it is stated that, excepting the wife he loved, they were women without other protection, whom he married to give a home to.

All Afghans are religious fanatics, and though their fanaticism may not be always noticeable, it requires only the occasion to bring it out. Believing as they do that their religion has replaced Christianity as Christianity replaced the Jewish religion, and that God inspires a new religion at different eras as the advancement of man requires it, and therefore their own religion, being the latest, is necessarily the true one, it is not a country where Christian missionaries would be likely to produce much effect.

CHAPTER XVII

POLITICAL SITUATION

Amir's policy in killing off leading men of country to ensure his son's reign—Dwindling revenue—Why Amir could not meet Lord Curzon in India—Russian encroachment on frontier—Russian influence in Kabul—Afghanistan a menace to Russian approach towards India—Afghan rule cheapest means of keeping unruly tribes in order—Policy to keep the Afghans well armed—Sympathy with English justice and government—Influence of British Agent on the people—Why railways are not wanted in Afghanistan—Reason rich mines are left unworked—Seaboard wanted by Amir on Beloochistan coast—Internal policy of Amir Abdur Rahman.

FROM the beginning of his reign, it was the policy of Amir Abdur Rahman to get rid in one way or another of those men who had much influence in the country, and could, by attaching to themselves a following, become a menace to his interests. It was not politic to do this openly, nor to get rid of many at one time, but gradually all who were likely to cause him trouble were disposed of. The last influential man left in the country was Ghulam Hyder, the commander-in-chief, and during the latter part of the Amir's reign he was often invited to Kabul, but always evaded the invitation on one pretext or another. He at last died at his post near the Indian frontier, and invidious remarks were made when the native doctor, who had

been his hakeem, and attended him in his last sickness, was sent for to Kabul, where the Amir raised him to the rank of colonel, and gave him money and presents, and generally made much of him.

One of the Amir's methods of getting rid of those men who caused him any anxiety was described to me by one who said he had been appointed to do the work on several occasions. This man was not a Mussulman, and it was one evening, after drinking a good deal of my whisky, that he related his experiences, otherwise I doubt if he would have had the courage to say anything about the matter. Instead of mentioning the man's name I will call him Y. Y. said the Amir sent for him late one night, and asked if he knew a certain man. This man was of high rank, and on saying that he knew him, Y. was told to go to the Captain of the Guard, and get twelve soldiers, as was written in the order now given him, after which he was to go to the man's house and, on the pretext that the Amir wanted him privately on some urgent business, take him to a certain part of the old city which is in ruins, and when he got the man there he was to act according to instructions which were written on another paper the Amir gave him. Y. accordingly went to the man's house, taking the twelve soldiers with him, and leaving them outside, went to the inner gate and waited, as is the etiquette of the country, while the doorkeeper told the master of the house that Y. wished to see him on some urgent business.

Receiving permission, he followed the servant up to the room where the man was sitting, together with several friends and relations, drinking tea. When the man saw Y., he called out and asked him to come and sit by him, and drink tea with them. Y. did as he was asked, and then whispered in the man's ear that the Amir Sahib wanted him on some very important matter, and it was best that the Amir should not be kept waiting. The man said he would go into the harem and tell his family he was going out, and would not be back till late, but Y. told him not to delay even to do that, as the Amir was very urgent on his going at once, and soon they were outside together. When they got outside the gate the soldiers surrounded them, and the man wanted to know why these men came round them, but Y. told him that the Amir had sent a guard in his honour for the hour was late, so they went on, the soldiers walking on both sides, until they came to the bridge which spans the river, and here they turned to cross it, for the old part of the city to which Y. had been ordered to take the man lay in that direction. The man, however, got suspicious, and asked why they were going away from the palace, instead of towards it, and he seemed inclined to break away; but the soldiers gathered round closer, and Y. made an excuse that the Amir had ordered them to go that way, as he did not wish others to see them going towards the palace, and that they were to re-cross the river lower down, and reach their destination

that way. The man said no more, and they went on, but when the road led them still further away from the palace he refused to go further; but on Y. telling him that it was the Amir's orders, and perhaps seeing that it was useless to resist doing as he was told, he went on with them. When they at last arrived at a place in the ruins where there was an old disused well, the soldiers were signalled to seize the man, who, realizing what was intended, struggled fiercely, but was eventually overpowered, and held down on the ground. The officer of the men then came up and asked what was to be done further, so taking the paper given him by the Amir, Y. lighted a match, and after reading it told the officer that the man's head was to be severed from the body. The officer then walked back to his men, taking out his sword as he went, and while the man was held down, cut through the throat, and at last finished the job, but the man's violent struggles rendered it difficult to do what was ordered, until a gash had been made in the throat, and loss of blood weakened him. The head and body were then cast into an old well, and earth thrown on top to hide all traces, and they returned to the palace, and on arrival there Y. went to the Amir and reported that he had done as was ordered; the Amir said, "It is good," and told him he had leave to go home.

Y. said that night, after going to bed, every time he shut his eyes he could see the man's head as it was when it was at last severed from the body, and

that it was several nights before he could sleep without starting up again thinking he saw the same thing. A few weeks after this had happened, the dead man's son went to the Amir, and said that Y. had called for his father late one night, intimating that the Amir Sahib wanted him, and the two of them had gone out together, and since then his father had not been seen. The Amir told him it was true, but to keep his mind at rest, for his father had been sent a long journey on a special mission and, God willing, he would come back. The relatives of men got rid of in this way, however, soon guessed the fate of those missing, and for their own sakes kept quiet lest they too should be taken away and never return.

The Amir's object in getting rid of men who might cause disturbance was not only to prevent trouble during his own reign, but also to prepare the way for the peaceful accession of his son to the throne, and his thoroughness in carrying out all he did has made it very unlikely that if Ayoob Khan or Yakoob Khan returned to their country they could get together a following of sufficient numbers to cause any serious trouble. It was to prevent disturbances after his death that the Amir kept all his sons in Kabul, and put them in charge of various official departments, instead of making them governors of different provinces as former Amirs had done, for that was the cause of the fighting among the sons for supremacy and rule when the father died, because

each son as the governor of a province had money and an army to help him in a struggle for the throne, and as each brother wanted it a good deal of fighting always ensued, and caused much bloodshed and misery in the country from time to time.

The history of Afghanistan shows how brother fought brother, and sons their father, one killing or blinding the other in a fierce desire to rule supreme, and the foresight of the Amir prevented a repetition of these horrors on his death. When that occurred there was no one but Sirdar Habibullah who had any chance as a candidate for the throne, and having been the head Sirdar for many years, and having also represented his father, who was seldom in good health, on many official occasions, he was looked upon by the leading men of the country as the one to succeed to the throne, and consequently received their support. This, together with his immediate occupation of the fortified palace of Arak, whereby he gained control of the treasury and the stores of modern arms and ammunition as soon as his father was dead, made him master of the situation, and there was no one likely to give him trouble except the Queen-Sultana, the mother of his half-brother, Mahomed Omar Khan, who was then about twelve years of age, and she was at once shut out of Arak, where she usually occupied the harem-serai built for the use of the Amir's chief wife, and had to live in her private palace, Gulistan serai, which is situated on the Deh Afghanan side of the city. Here she

was kept nominally in great honour as the chief wife of the late Amir, but practically a prisoner, for all her chief and confidential servants were taken from her and others in the Amir's pay sent in place of them, and no one was allowed to go and see her, while all entrances to her palace, excepting the principal gate, were bricked up. The Amir and Sirdar Nasrullah Khan were particularly urgent in their orders to Mrs. Daly, the lady doctor in Kabul, that she should not visit the Queen-Sultana or hold communication with her, and they apparently feared that she might be induced to take or send a letter from the queen to the Indian Government, asking for aid in placing her own son on the throne; and, though the Indian Government might not take any notice of her letter, yet such action might prejudice the new Amir in their eyes. Also those officials and army officers who were possessed of any influence, and were inclined to side with the Queen-Sultana, were bought over by the new Amir, and were raised to higher rank.

The army, however, was seething with discontent, and a rising was feared and indeed imminent; but a promise, which was afterwards ratified, of an increase of pay all round kept them from any open act of insubordination, although there was a good deal of muttering for a long time, and the soldiers freely expressed their opinions and said they wanted any other government but that of the reigning family. The want of reliance in the Government

among the people was shown by open acts of robbery with violence in different parts of the country, the like of which had been unknown for many years, and it expressed the indifference of the people to the constituted authority. This want of reliance in, or objection to, the existing Government was further shown by the attacks on the Europeans resident in the country, one of whom was shot from behind and killed by the officer of his escort for a slight so trivial as to induce a doubt as to whether the man acted entirely on his own initiative, or had been prompted by those who hoped thereby to cause complications with other powers prejudicial to their own Government.

At the time I left Kabul, the revenue of the country was barely sufficient to pay for the army, and it has been for many years gradually dwindling in amount, and the Amir was in great need of money. Also no arrangement had been come to with the Indian Government regarding the continuance of the subsidy which was paid the former Amir, and the present ruler, for fear of refusal, dared not ask for it prior to arrangements being made for the continuance with himself of the terms of alliance made with his father. Lord Curzon was insistent in his requests for the Amir to visit him in Peshawar, in order to settle all matters in a personal interview; but with the people in a state of unrest, and so many matters of importance to the internal government of the country requiring immediate settlement and

action, the danger of leaving Kabul at that time was too great for the Amir to risk. The Russian Government offered to present him with many field-guns, rifles, and ammunition, but the offer was declined, for the Russians are feared and distrusted, and their encroachment on Afghan territory is greatly resented. Some of the officials, however, appeared to be in favour of Russian help, for they said that if the English Government did not help the country there were others who would, and there were those who endeavoured to persuade the Amir into accepting Russian help.

About this time an Afghan general came in from the Russian frontier, and it was generally said that he brought with him two Russians, dressed like Afghan slave boys, of high family. Nothing was definitely known of this; but at the time it was said that these Russians were in Kabul, the Amir went to stop a week or two at his summer palace at Hindeki, some six miles south of the city, taking with him none but a few trusted officials and friends, and it was peremptorily ordered that while there he was to be left undisturbed, and no one but those who were sent for were to go to him. This general afterwards changed a large amount of Russian money in the city, and from that time Russian notes could be bought in the bazar, and as it was the first time since his accession to the throne that the Amir had stayed at Hindeki, or any other place except in the Arak stronghold, and as nothing definite was publicly

known of what transpired, or indeed anything at all of what the Amir did while he was at Hindeki, it was all very unusual, for all that the Amir does, except when in his harem, is commonly known and discussed, and a good deal is known of what he does there.

It will be seen that the Amir's position for some time after his succession was a difficult one, and there are still many elements of danger to be overcome. He has neither the experience nor self-reliance of his father, and what he may do in a critical time, or how he would emerge from the test of danger and adversity, cannot be forecast; but as the ingredients which go towards the making of anarchy and rebellion are not wanting in the country, time will probably give the answer.

Afghanistan is frequently described as a buffer state between India and Russia, but it is a buffer which the rolling forward of either power would readily crush. The bulk of the people are in a discontented condition, for with high taxation driving them from their lands to seek work as coolies, food yearly growing dearer, and epidemics common, it is likely enough that they would welcome any change as a change for the better, and until the Amir has a grasp on the people equal to that of his father, an invading power would not have an altogether combined Afghanistan to contend against, in spite of the Amir's widely distributed pamphlets on Jihad.

The Amir, and those with him, rely a good deal

on Jihad (religious war), which is to be preached by the mullahs in case an invading army crosses the frontier, and pamphlets on the subject have been printed and distributed all over the country. But as matters now stand, the people, although extremely fanatical, can hardly be relied on to fight very vigorously, or for any length of time. The army is supplied with modern field-guns, rifles, and ammunition, but, although of a modern pattern, they are few in number, and are not equal to those of other countries in range and accuracy. The army is also wholly untrained as compared with the troops of the two great powers on either side of them, and its officers have no more knowledge of modern warfare than the rank-and-file. It is only in the natural difficulties offered by the mountainous description of country to the effective movement of troops and transport of heavy guns that the Amir could hope to offer any serious opposition to an invading army, and it is unlikely that after the first stand made against the invader they would risk further battle. They would be more likely to resort to the guerilla methods common to them, cutting up small detachments and harassing the rear and lines of communication; but the larger the invading army, the less effective would these methods be.

As a means of keeping unruly tribes in order, the Afghans are best left to govern themselves. Their methods of quelling rebellion and disorder are

more ruthless, and therefore more effective and lasting, for the description of people dealt with than are the humane methods of other people. Amir Abdur Rahman, after killing off the bulk of a nation (men, women, and children) for rebelling against his authority, has had the remainder transported to a distant part of the country, where, rid of former associations and by intermarriage with other people, they have lost their old traditions, and settled down quietly to the new order of things. Should the English (or other power) occupy the country, the cost of an army of occupation, which would be necessary to keep the people in order, would probably equal that of the Indian army, until a new generation had grown up, more adaptable and willing to accept the altered condition of affairs.

If it was intended that the Afghans should be used as a means of checking Russian aggression, it would no doubt be better that they were well supplied with the best modern arms; but on the other hand, there is always the chance of such arms being used against the English, for the Afghans look upon all who are not of their own country and religion as enemies, and it is unlikely that any existing treaty would be considered or have the effect of making them hesitate to take advantage of an occasion which gave them an opportunity for extending their country, or of benefiting themselves otherwise. When the border tribes rose and necessitated the Tirah campaign, the late Amir had some

thousands of transport animals collected near Kabul, at the back of the mountains, and though a rising on his frontier no doubt necessitated precautionary measures in case his own interests were menaced, yet, had the British been driven beyond the Indus as was expected, and which was reported in the bazars as accomplished shortly after the rising started, the temptation to retake the Peshawar district would perhaps have been a powerful one, for that district is always claimed as part of the Afghan territory which was stolen from them by the British.

Generally the sympathies of the people lie towards the justice and equality of the British rule, and this is due mostly to the stories related of the freedom of life in India by the people who have lived there; but the authorities deal severely with those who show a liking for the English, and as they fear to let any information of their doings reach the British Government, a spy truly or falsely convicted of reporting to the English is an offender, who is summarily and finally dealt with.

The British agent in Kabul, and those with him, are little better than prisoners, for they see no one, and cannot themselves mix with the people, and have to confine their peregrinations to the boundaries of Kabul. All who are found visiting the British agent are imprisoned, and many hundreds have been killed merely on suspicion of giving him reports of the doings of the Government; and an Afghan spy,

ostensibly doing a trade as a tea-seller, is stationed on the road opposite the gate of the agent's house (the house lies a little back from the road) for the purpose of noting those who go there, and if any man passes even within a few yards of the gate, he is reported to the Kotwal; but the fear of the people of being seen anywhere near the house is now such that all give it a wide berth in passing by, and no man who values his life would dare to be seen talking to any of the agent's men whom he met in the bazar.

All this would seem to point to a good deal happening which is detrimental to the interests of the British Government which the Afghan ruler fears may come to their knowledge, but from what I saw and heard in the country, it is only occasionally that anything happens which would interest the Indian Government, and then only mildly. It may be, however, to prevent news of these occasional happenings leaking out that the Afghan rulers consider it necessary to make the people afraid of giving news of any sort to the enemies of their country; for so they look upon all those who are not of themselves.

They certainly have occasion to fear their prison system becoming known publicly, for cruelty of all sorts is common in the way of torture. Imagine a prison where the limbs which have been hacked off men are left lying about, together with the dismembered bodies of those dead, of the suffering inflicted on them, until the whole place reeks of decomposing flesh, and then consider the frame of

mind of hundreds who are imprisoned without trial, unknowing of what their own punishment is to be, who daily live in the midst of these horrors. If the truth about the Kabul prisons were generally known, other countries would probably unite in insisting on such barbarity being stopped.

The common people, who have their own way of looking at everything, attribute the large numbers of men killed in prison without any generally known reason for their execution to the British Government, and say that as the British were unable to conquer them by fighting, they now pay the Amir large sums of money monthly (the subsidy) to kill them in other ways. The people also say of the Bala Hisar (high fort) in Kabul, which Lord Roberts rased to the ground in 1880 after the massacre of Cavagnari and his men, and which still remains in ruins, that the Amir has been ordered by the British Government not to rebuild it, as one of the conditions of his occupying the throne. The opinion of these people, however fallacious, is still the opinion of those who comprise the bulk of the population, and although they are ignorant and uninformed their opinion ought not to be altogether neglected.

Amir Abdur Rahman, on one of the occasions when he favoured me with remarks on political affairs, told me he had received a letter from one of his spies in Russia, and he would read it to me. His object in doing so, of course, was not that he wished me to keep the information to myself, but

I was leaving for India the following day, and it was a matter the Amir could not very well make the occasion of a letter to the Indian Government. The spy wrote that he had it from a Russian official in high authority that his Government intended, so long as Amir Abdur Rahman lived, to leave Afghanistan untouched, but that after his death they would seize it; and when the Amir had read this to me he remarked that if it was true that such was their intention, although he would be dead when they endeavoured to take his country, it was, nevertheless, a matter of importance to him, for he had for many years been striving to unite and raise his country to such position that it could hold its own among the nations and remain always an independent kingdom, and if at the time of his death his object might not be altogether accomplished, still, what he had done would form a foundation on which it was his greatest desire that his sons and their descendants would build the wall which was to keep the country intact and prevent foreign aggression

On all occasions when Amir Abdur Rahman spoke to me on such matters he showed that he had the good of his country at heart, and at times he even shed tears when he reflected on his failure to imbue the whole of his people with his ambitions, and that all his efforts, even punishing and killing to the extent he had done, failed to induce them to forego those habits which prevented the union and strength he prayed for.

Political Situation

On the occasion mentioned above, the Amir threw some light on his aversion to having railways in Afghanistan. He said he had powerful neighbours on both sides of him. Each power was anxious to extend their railways into his country, and, failing that, they were always trying to persuade him to construct them himself for the benefit and improvement of his people. But supposing he did as they wanted and laid railways over his country, then they would point out that unless his system communicated with theirs they would be of little advantage to him, and he himself could see that too. And then if he joined up his railways with one power, the other power would claim a like concession and he would have to give it to risk friction and war, and yet England as his ally would expect to be the only one so favoured. Therefore, he said, it is better that the country should go without railways, however much it loses in its trade and development by so doing.

Amir Abdur Rahman never favoured me with any remarks which would throw a light on his apparently culpable neglect in working the rich mines of his country. Instead, he often mentioned the benefit to his country which the working of these mines would occasion, and soon after my appointment he gave me written orders to build the necessary works for smelting the copper ores which have been found in the neighbourhood of Kabul. When the work was about half completed, however, he sent instructions to me to postpone work on it until further

orders, and thereafter let the matter rest in abeyance, so that the work still remains uncompleted. He avoided any mention to me of his reason for stopping a work on which he had been so keen to begin, and it can only be supposed that he was fearful of adding an incentive to interference with his country on the part of his neighbours by showing the riches it contained.

Amir Habibullah, who follows his father's policy in all things, has done nothing towards developing the resources of the country beyond ascertaining the position and value of its various mineral deposits. Amir Habibullah is, however, desirous of obtaining a strip of country from the west of Afghanistan to the coast on the Beloochistan side, in order to obtain a seaboard which would enable him to deal direct with other countries and obviate the necessity of going through the territories of his neighbours—permission for which depends always on their goodwill. With such a seaboard they would be independent, could develop the country, and sell the produce of their mines and other exports direct, and with the proceeds of such trade could import whatever war material or other goods they required, and strengthen themselves without the knowledge of or interference from their neighbours.

The Afghan rulers have spies and others in India as well as in European countries who give them information on all subjects which affect Afghanistan either directly or indirectly, and the Amir and his intimates take the utmost interest in the doings of

those who rule the destinies of other nations, and they watch all that goes on between the different powers. But, excepting these few in authority, the people are shut off from news of the outer world, for there are no newspapers in the country, and the newspapers of other countries they are unable to read; and as their Government objects to foreigners entering the country and allows none such to do so except on business, and then only by special permission from the Amir, and as very few of their own people are allowed to travel on business across the border, the bulk of the Afghans are ignorant of everything except that which happens within their own limited sphere.

The Afghan rulers also in their conduct of the internal affairs of the country make a point of keeping it secluded and out of touch with the other countries around them, and British officers who have crossed the border either knowingly or otherwise, have been made prisoners and kept so until the Amir's orders were received. The intercourse of the people with other nations would no doubt tend to civilize them, and by broadening their views do away with much of their present fanatical prejudice against all other people, which is due principally to the secluded life they are forced to lead, practically cut off from the rest of the world. It is this thought which directs the policy of seclusion of their rulers, for they make a practice of working upon the ignorance and religious superstition of the people to influence them in any required direction.

CHAPTER XVIII

ROAD FROM KABUL TO PESHAWAR

Difficulty of getting permission to enter Afghanistan and to leave it—Description of country passed through—Camping-places on way down and distances—Description of Jelalabad city—Usbeg horseback game of Buz-bazee—Kabul river at Jelalabad and beyond—The musak—Summer heat—The last day's journey.

AFTER several years spent in Kabul, one experiences a sense of elation when the time comes for leaving it. The thought of being back soon in civilization, among one's friends and the people of one's own country, produces so keen a desire to be with them again at once that the time occupied in making ready to start, and that spent on the journey, seems interminable. When in Kabul there is a remoteness in the thought of home and England so great that the memory seems to deal with the land and people of another planet, and if one were a Buddhist it might easily be conceived that the memory dealt with a former incarnation, for one is so cut off from the outer world, and all things are so different, that it appears like a separate existence.

Afghanistan is a difficult country to get into, for not only is the Amir's written permission necessary, but the Indian Government must consent also, for no

European is allowed to go through the Khyber Pass and cross the frontier without a permit, and that is only granted on producing the Amir's firman; and even then one is not allowed to start until the Afghans across the frontier have been communicated with and the escort arranged to meet the traveller on a certain day. It is also difficult to leave it, for the Amir is chary of giving leave to those who have spent some time in the country. I was there for over eight years without a break, and although I repeatedly asked for leave I was always put off on one pretext or another. When permission to leave has been given there always occurs another two or three weeks' delay in getting together the pack-horses required for carrying luggage, and the escort of sowars (cavalry) necessary for protection on the journey, and the tents and carpets, etc. With a desire to start as soon as ever possible, the casual to-morrow-or-next-day habit of the people, to which one has got accustomed more or less, becomes of a sudden a prominent characteristic, and proportionately irritating. But as all things come to those who wait, provided they wait long enough, everything is at last ready, and one morning all the boxes and packages are fastened on the backs of the pack-animals, the servants are seated on those horses which carry the lightest loads, and the baggage is got off, and an hour or two later one mounts and starts off one's self.

It is an eight days' journey from Kabul to Peshawar if long marches are undertaken each day,

but the people who travel up and down that way usually take eleven or twelve days. I have done it in six days, but to do it in this time all the riding and pack-horses must be of the best, for the mountainous country traversed, and rough stony character of the tracks (there are no roads excepting round Kabul itself), make it very trying for the horses, and on a very long day's march some will drop from fatigue, and cases of horses dying on the road are not at all uncommon.

When the valley of Kabul has been left behind the country appears very desolate, for there is nothing but mountains, rocks, and sand to be seen. The second day's journey takes one over the Latabund Pass which lies at a considerable altitude above Kabul, which is itself seven thousand feet above sea-level, and the rest of the journey until Jelalabad is reached is all over mountains. Camp for the night is pitched near small villages set in valleys where a little water makes the cultivation of a few patches of sandy soil possible. It is the very small amount of rainfall which makes the country so barren generally for the disintegrated rock which collects in the valleys, and the foot of the mountains forms a prolific soil when it can be irrigated, and it is also the want of verdure and trees on the mountains, and absence of clouds with their accompanying haze of moisture, which is the cause of the monotonous colouring of the landscape, for there are many fine mountain scenes which would be magnificent, but

for the dryness of the atmosphere which makes the hills and mountains, far and near, shades of one dirty looking colour. At the beginning of a day's march, the sameness of the prospect makes one almost sigh at the dreary stretch of country to be ridden over, for it offers nothing of interest to lessen the sense of fatigue, and the only desire while riding is to get it done with, and look forward to the camping-place.

The usual stopping-places between Kabul and Jelalabad, which is about halfway to Peshawar, are Budkhark, twelve miles; Barikab, thirty-two miles; Jagdalak, sixteen miles; Gandamak, twenty-eight miles; Fatehabad, eighteen miles; and Jelalabad, nineteen miles. These distances are only approximate, for they are estimated from the time occupied in riding from one to the other. There are other places at which one may camp for the night if necessary, according to the number of days in which it is desired to make the journey; but the above are best if one wishes to make each day's journey equal in fatigue for the horses and pack-animals. The shorter marches are over bad mountain tracts, which tire the horses quite as much as a longer journey over fairly level country. The sixth day's journey to Jelalabad is over ground which slopes down gradually from the foot hills, but almost the whole of it is through sand mixed with small stones in which the horses feet sink deeply, and makes the going hard and tiring. Those who have walked any distance in dry

sand by the seashore will appreciate the fatigue of the horses in getting over such country.

When I left Kabul snow was falling, and had been doing so for the past two days, and the mountains and plains were covered with it, and to make matters worse a blizzard was blowing. The coldness of a blizzard must be experienced to be appreciated, and I heard afterwards that two or three soldiers on night-guard had been frozen to death; but this is a common occurrence during the severe winters experienced in Kabul, when the wind gains in piercing intensity as the cold increases during the night.

After riding through the snow for some hours, with limbs stiffened and senses benumbed by the icy wind, it was with a feeling of thankfulness that I saw the walls of the serai, showing through the driving snow; and when we reached the place and dismounted, I found that the circulation in my right hand had stopped, and it was only after having it rubbed for some time that it got right again. The serais, which are stationed at intervals along the route, are intended for the use of the caravans, and they are made in the form of a square, with a high wall surrounding it, and the rooms are built against the inner side of the wall. There is a verandah outside the rooms, under which the packages carried by the caravans are stored for the night in bad weather, and which also forms a shelter for the camels and pack-animals. Over the gate of the serai, in which we lodged for the first night, was an upper room,

THE SERAI AT INGDALAK, ON THE ROAD FROM KABUL TO PESHAWAR.

To face p. 312

built for the use of travellers of position and standing, and this was placed at my disposal; but as regards its comforts, I can only say that it was better than being outside. One of the lower rooms which are used by the men of the caravans travelling up and down would have been warmer, but they are filthy, and mostly contain a vigorous population undesirable to those of clean habits; and the room I occupied was fairly clean, but it was unfurnished, and had no fireplace, while the window was composed of wooden shutters, and round the frame were cracks an inch wide, where the wood had shrunk away from the wall and left open spaces, and in the wall itself were large cracks, due probably to earthquakes, through which the wind whistled; so while waiting for the baggage to come up, I had an open fire lighted on the top of the verandah outside, and warmed myself one side at a time. It was not until night had fallen that the baggage animals came in, and I was able to get a cup of hot tea, and an hour or two later I got some food, and it was rather a dreary time waiting for it, when tired and hungry, and the thermometer below zero. To undress and go to sleep with the blizzard blowing in at all the cracks in wall and window was not to be thought of, so I took off my boots only and lay down, covering myself with all the rugs I had; and in the morning when I woke, I found that the water in the wash-basin was frozen solid, and fine drift snow covered the floor and bed.

The morning was clear and bright, and the dazzling whiteness of the snow in the sunlight was blinding, until the eyes became a little used to it; but the wind continued in all its severity, and while riding over the Latabund Pass, we found it far too cold at that altitude to sit in the saddle with comfort, for our hands and feet became so numbed and useless that we feared frostbite, and therefore the escort and myself dismounted and walked, in order to keep ourselves warm, and led our horses, until about two o'clock in the afternoon, we reached the summit. Once on the other side of the pass, we were protected from the wind, but I thought it still too cold to ride, and so walked on the rest of the way to Barikab, where I reached camp at six in the evening, very tired with a long day's walk. The pack animals, which are too heavily laden to take the short cuts over the mountains that the riding horses follow, did not reach camp until nine o'clock, so that it was again very late before I got my dinner, and by the time I got it I wanted it.

Thence to Jelalabad, as each successive range of mountains brought us still lower down it got warmer day by day, but the warmth was comparative only, for it was still very cold when we reached Jelalabad. Here I spent a day, having a day extra in hand in which to reach the Khyber Pass, which is open for travellers twice a week only, and occupied myself in looking over the city and inspecting the

Amir's palace and gardens there. The city is a small one, and is walled round, as usual, but the wall is broken down in places, and everything has a most dilapidated look, and many parts are in ruins. There is no attempt to keep the city clean, and the inhabitants of each house make their own sanitary arrangements, which practically means none at all, as each one throws the refuse of the house outside to lie there and rot, if not eaten up by the dogs and crows. The water of the place stinks, and it is not at all surprising that when cholera visits it, being brought up from India with the caravans, it makes a long and effective stay. One wonders that it does not wipe off the whole of the population, but the dry climate and frequent winds, no doubt, help towards the sanitary condition of the city, and perhaps long-continued successive visits of cholera have made many of the people immune.

It was in Jelalabad that I first saw the Usbeg game of "Buz-bazee" (literally, "goat play"). It is played on horseback, and the first thing done is to kill a goat or sheep by cutting its throat in the usual manner while the Usbeg horsemen gather around. When this has been done, a signal is given, and all the riders make a dash at the carcase, which lies on the ground. The man who gets it flings it across the saddle in front of him, and goes off at full gallop, the others chasing him until one or another catches him up, and then ensues a struggle, while still at full gallop, for the possession of the body. The man

who gets it is chased in turn by the others, and when the carcase falls to the ground, as it does at times, it is picked up as the rider gallops by, the horseman riding with one leg and arm thrown over the horse to enable him to reach low down to the ground. So the game goes on until the limbs are wrenched apart and the victors ride off at last with the portion they have been able to secure, and which the speed and agility of their horses prevents others from taking from them.

The usual journey from Jelalabad to Peshawar occupies five days. Girdi Kutch, the first stopping-place, is twenty miles; Basawal, eighteen miles; Daka, the Afghan frontier post, sixteen miles; and Lundi Kotal, the British frontier post on the far side of the Khyber Pass, twenty miles. The last day's journey is from Lundi Kotal through the Khyber Pass, and past Jumrood, the fort which guards the mouth of the Khyber on the Indian side, and on into Peshawar, where one enters once more into civilization.

From Jelalabad to the Khyber mountains the country is a comparatively flat one, and for the greater part of the journey the route follows the course of the Kabul river, which is here broad and shallow, though the current is swift, on account of the considerable fall in level between Jelalabad and Peshawar. This portion of the river contains several whirlpools, which render navigation a matter of difficulty and danger to all who are not well

conversant with the currents. The whirlpools are said to be mostly situated in the narrow gorges of the Khyber mountains, through which the river flows, and that it is here where the skill of the raftsmen is called into play to prevent sudden disaster, for the swiftness of the current gives little opportunity of correcting a mistake in steering.

Jelalabad is one of the few spots in Afghanistan where there are many trees. The forests are situated some few miles from the city, and may be seen covering some of the hills in the distance. The timber, a description of the pine tree, after being cut down, is roughly squared into logs and dragged down to the river, where they are formed into rafts and floated down into Peshawar for sale. A small amount of produce is also carried on the rafts and sold in India.

On one of my journeys down to Peshawar the governor of Jelalabad, by order of the Amir, sent me several large melons which are grown in the district. The size of the melons was so great, about two feet long and one and a half feet in diameter, that I had no means of carrying them with me, and on this being represented to the governor, he gave instructions for them to be carried by raft into Peshawar and handed over to me there. The raftsmen told me that they would be in Peshawar twelve hours after leaving Jelalabad, and as the distance between the two points is about a hundred miles, some idea of the speed of the current may be gained.

The water of the river is fed by the melted snow from the mountains, and is intensely cold, and I was told that any one who attempted to swim across the river would be carried so far down by the current before reaching the other side that the coldness of the water would make him numbed and powerless, and he would drown. The people of the district, when they have to cross the river, do so on musaks distended with air, which keep the body clear of the water, while allowing the use of the legs and arms as a means of propulsion; but even then the limbs get so numbed and paralyzed that only strong men can make use of the musak as a means of crossing the river, or floating down to another village some miles lower on the same side; and I was told that the frequent use of it brings on rheumatism in the legs and arms—and one can quite understand that it would do so.

The musak is the same as that used by watermen all over the East for carrying water. It is made of a goat or sheepskin, which is treated to make the skin soft and flexible, and afterwards sown up, so that it has the original form of the animal, minus head and legs; the joints are made watertight, and the whole skin when distended by air being blown into it forms a very buoyant vessel. The villager lies face downwards on it, and pushing off into deep water, strikes out with arms and legs, much as if he was swimming, and those I have seen travelling down the river in this way were going at a speed which I estimated at a good ten miles an hour.

Close to Jelalabad, where the river narrows as it runs between some low hills, the villagers have stretched a thick rope across from bank to bank, fastening it to large iron bars fixed in the rocks at the side, and by means of this rope they ferry a rickety-looking raft, which is built up of frail-looking poles roughly tied together, and supported on musaks, from one bank to the other, and carry freight, passengers, and animals as required. The rope is a country-made one of unequal thickness, and ragged with loose strands, and has a good deal of stress thrown on it by the swift current which surges against the raft, and swings it from side to side on its passage, and it struck me that a passenger addicted to nerves would find the crossing a rather trying time. I was not surprised to learn that the raft occasionally broke away with disastrous results to those on it, for few of the people can swim.

The people of the district once petitioned the Amir to make a bridge over the river, and to ensure the free communication which would benefit the people on both sides, a bridge is badly wanted. The Amir, who was averse to making any fixed structure which might benefit some future enemy, decided on having a pontoon bridge made; but the men he put in charge of the work being altogether inexperienced, their efforts were made short work of by the river, and the idea was abandoned.

I once suggested a scheme to the Amir of taking advantage of the river for carrying freight between

the Jelalabad district and India, and such a scheme is quite feasible; for, by cutting a deep channel in the wider portions of the river, and blasting away the rocks which cause the whirlpools and other dangers to navigation, the journey down to India could be made easy, and steam tugs could be employed for drawing barges up on the return journey. At present pack-animals are used, and the cost of freight every year is a large item to the Government, and for several months in the year the heat of the lower country between Jelalabad and the Khyber, and consequent high death-rate among the pack-animals, prohibits the carriage of anything but very necessary articles, which must be brought up at all costs. The Amir was at first disposed to have the scheme gone into, but eventually he let the matter drop, as he did all schemes which did not offer immediate reimbursement.

The country between Jelalabad and the Khyber is well cultivated, and there are many villages on both sides of the river; but a good deal of ground is allowed to lie idle which could be made profitable, and the reason for this is, no doubt, that there are no cheap means of carrying produce for sale in India, and the people have no incentive to grow more than is sufficient for their own consumption. The soil is very productive, and most of the cereals, fruits, etc., suitable for a hot climate, grow well. The heat during the summer months is great, though not so much so as in the Peshawar district. It is, however,

quite hot enough to render riding over that part of the country a very trying experience; and I remember when travelling up once in June how my mouth became so parched that I dare not let my tongue touch the roof of the mouth, as I was afraid it would stick there and choke me, and I was ready to drink from any of the stinking wells we came to, to get relief. Fortunately there was no cholera about at the time, or I might have fared worse, for no thought of disease would have deterred me from drinking. The temperature is made more trying than it would be because the rocks absorb the heat of the sun and become very hot, and the heat given out by them, together with that of the sun, makes the narrow defiles here and there feel like ovens, and they are so stifling that breathing more resembles gasping, until they are left behind, when the hot wind of the plains comes as a perfect relief after what has been gone through. "Like unto the shadow of a great rock in a dry land" has a fuller meaning to those who travel in such places.

The route from Kabul to Peshawar is the shortest and the recognized one for those who travel to India. There are other roads which might be used to get there; but even if one had the opportunity of using them, there are few who would care to prolong the time spent on the journey by electing to travel that way.

When the last day's journey through Afghan territory brings one at last to the point where

British territory begins, the line of demarcation is readily defined. Up to the point where the Afghan rule extends, one travels over the country as Nature made it, and the way is strewn with rocks and boulders, which are allowed to lie in the path, and necessitate the horses walking round, or in and out between them, and making them traverse thereby a much longer distance than a clear road would give. But from that point where British authority begins, there is a smooth graded road, which leads one high up over the hills and mountains of the Khyber to Lundi Kotal, and thence through the difficult mountain country of the Pass, and on into Peshawar, with gradients so easy that one can take a dog-cart and drive at a sharp trot the whole of the distance, and cover ground in a few hours which, on the Afghan side of the frontier, takes a long day's tedious riding to get over.

INDEX

A

Abdur Rahman, Amir—
Admiration for Gladstone, Bismarck, MacMahon, and General White, 118–119
Afghans in Australia, and, 284
Amusements, 105–108
Anecdote of, when at war with his family, 117–118
Anecdote of, when in Russia, 116
Attendants (slave boys), 108–110
Attitude towards moullahs, 269
Attitude towards working mines, 261, 305
Aversion to railways, 305
Burial, 130
Character, 117, 118
Conduct at festivals, 207
Customs, 105, 106
Death, 126
Deserted during earthquake, 256
Doctor and medicine, 104
Drinking-water, 104
Favourites, 124
Fled from cholera to Paghman, 162, 200
Fond of flowers, 107
Food, 103
Government, 98 *seq.*, 102
Guard, 105
Hat with diamond star, 133
Imported Russian spy system, 151
Interest in trade and mechanics, 229, 233

Abdur Rahman, Amir—*continued*—
Method of putting down robbery, 28
Offence of writing reports concerning him to the Indian Government, 152
On Afridi rising, 110–112
On English Parliament, 114
Palaces, 51–52, 102
Personal appearance, 37
Petitions to, 138
Plans for his country, 113, 117, 304
Policy of getting rid of influential men, 269 *seq.*
Policy towards England, 110, 113 *seq.*, 128, 208
Preparations for fighting or travelling, 104
Punishments, 157 *seq.*, 162 *seq.*, 170, 300
Reads letter from spy in Russia to author, 308
Reception of author, 36
Reception of Nasrullah Khan, 32
Sons, his treatment of them, 120, 121, 293
Stays at Nasrullah's house, 121
Story of Moullah and, 15
Subjugated the Hazaras and Kafirs, 63
Sufferings from gout, 108, 125
Title, "Light of Religion and Faith," 120, 133

Index

Abdur Rahman, Amir—*continued*—
Tomb prepared at Kila Asham Khan, 129
Views on Boer War, 115
Afghanistan—
As a buffer state, 298
Condition of country for warfare, 226
Difficult to enter, 308
Afghans—
Admire fat men, 89
Characteristics, 61, 62, 65 *seq.*, 78, 92, 100, 138, 227, 276
Colony in Australia, 283, 284
Complexion, 61
Discontented, 298
Family feuds, 66
Fond of children, 184
Lost tribes of Israel and, 62
Mode of meeting friends, 6
Policy of arming, 300
Religious fanatics, 288
Sympathy with English justice and government, 301
Workman, 235
Afridi rising, 110
Aminoolah, Sirdar, 110, 120
Amirs—
Internal policy, 307
Powers and duties, 98
Amusements, 68, 205
Animals, clean and unclean, 284
Apricots, 239
Arabic, children taught to read, 65
Arak fortified palace, 36
Abdur Rahman's body taken to, 128
Described, 51, 52
Army, 299
As a fighting machine, 225–227
Generals have no knowledge of modern warfare, 225
Asman Heights, 162, 164
Water-marked, 259
Astrologers, 84
Author—
Accompanies Shahzada to Kabul, 2
Appointment and work as engineer, 231–233
Assaying and reporting on minerals, 262
Attacked by Ghazis, 181
Exhibition of cinematograph, 141
First visit to Kabul, 1889, 166
Hindustani servant, 187
House and garden in Kabul, 177
Illness at Kandahar, 19
Inspects powder-shop, 183
Journey from Kabul to Peshawar, 308 *seq.*
On jury, 208
Presents from princes, 196
Quarters at Kabul, 33, 41
Quarters at Kandahar, 14
Received by Amir, 35, 36 *seq.*
Ride from Kabul to Peshawar, 11, 309 *seq.*
Riding and cycling, 176
Shooting on chamans, 175
Story of servants' superstition, 78
Ayoob Khan, 112, 293

B

Baber, summer palace at, 52
Baghibala palace, 52, 107
Abdur Rahman dies in, 127
Bala Hisar, Kabul, raised to the ground, 303
Bala Hisar, well in, 149
Barikab, 311, 314
Barracks, 219
Basawal, 316
Bazars, buying in, 190, 192 *seq.*
Bazars, lawlessness in, 192
Beating with sticks, 160
Blizzard, 312
Blue pigeon, 174, 176
Boer war, 115

Index

Boistan serai palace, 36, 52
  Abdul Rahman, buried in, 130
  Audience chamber in, 38
Bribery, 100
British Agent in Kabul, 301
Brown, General Sir J., meets Shahzada at Chaman, 1
Budkhark, 311
Burial of household treasure, 129
Buying in bazar, 190, 192 *seq.*

C

Camel meat, 88
Camels, ill-adapted for travelling over snow, 24
Camps, description of, 8
Caravans, 242
Carpets, 240
Carriers for hire, 195
Cattle-breeding, 240
Cavagnari massacred, 303
Chaman railway terminus near Afghan frontier, 1
Chamans, 174
Character of people, 64 *seq.*
Children, method of naming, 286
Children singing prayers on roof to avert calamity, 86
Chillum described, 89
Cholera epidemics, 45, 55, 87, 137, 162, 199, 200
Climate of Kabul, 53 *seq.*
Cloth manufactured, 240
Coal, 260, 263–264
Coinage and mint, 251
Cold and snow 23, 25, 54
Copper ores, 260
Court jester, 108, 207
Courtship and marriage, 92 *seq.*
Cows, 194
Curios, Hindoo dealers and, 206
Curzon, Lord, requests Amir to visit him in Peshawar, 296

D

Daka, Afghan frontier post, 316
Daly, Mrs., lady doctor, 130, 182, 185
  Not allowed to visit the Queen Sultana, 295
  Treating cholera cases, 200
Dances, 72
Dancing-girls, 71
Darwaza Ghazni pass, 29
Death penalty 98
Debt collecting, 250
Deh Afghanan, 35, 177
Dogs, 27, 46, 285
Donkeys, small size of, 14
Dress of men, 58
Drills, 214
Duck-shooting, 108, 175
Durbars, 99, 100, 105, 123
  On festivals, 206
Durrah-i-Yusef, coal at, 263
Dust storms, 54

E

Earthquakes, 255 *seq.*
Elephant, story of mad, 139
Englishmen dining with Amir, 103
Europeans in Kabul, 123, 130, 173 *seq.*
  Attend durbar on festivals, 206
  Laws and, 208
  Women and children, 184
Evil eye, the, 86
Execution, methods of, 168
Exports, 239

F

Fairies, 80
Fakirs, 271, 273
False reporting, 153
Famine of 1903, 197

Index

"Fanah" (wedge) torture, 153–155, 248
Fanatics (ghazis), 181
Fat men, 89
Fatehabad, 311
Festivals, 279–281
Firman, 185
Fish in Kabul river, 175
Fishing in rivers, method of, 17
Fleischer family, 130
Fleischer, Mr., murdered, 175
Fleischer, Mrs., her German nurse, 185
Flour, price of, 194
Food, 87–89, 194–195
  Lawful and unlawful, 284
Fowls, duck, geese, etc., raising, 194
Freight-carrying, 242
Fruit, dried, 239
Fuel in Government workshops, 230, 234, 263, 264
Funerals, 96–97

G

Games, 76
Gandamak, 311
Geology of country, 254 *seq.*
Ghazni, 23, 29; described, 24
Ghulam Hyder, 289
Girdi Kutch, 316
Girls become "purdah" about eight, 77
Gold, 260
Gold mine, an abandoned, 20
Government, 98, 101
Government stores, 102
Governors of Kandahar, 13
Grapes, 239
Gravestones, 96–97
Guards given to European servants of Government, 181
Gulistan serai, Queen Sultana's palace, 36, 52, 128

H

Habibullah Khan, Amir, 30, 31, 120
  Acknowledged Amir, 127
  Amusements, 139–141
  Attendants, 109
  Attitude towards fakirs, 273
  Attitude towards moullahs, 270
  Characteristics, 141, 207
  Conduct on Abdur Rahman's death, 127 *seq.*, 294
  Coronation, 132–134
  Desires seaboard, 306
  Disallowed petitions, 138
  Forms a parliament, 124
  In Arak, 137, 294
  Interest in machinery, 230
  Nominal head of army, 121
  Position difficult, 298
  Precautions regarding his food and drink, 104
  Promises of reform, 137
  Remains in Arak during cholera epidemic, 201
  Speech at coronation, 133–134
  Story of his cruelty, 161
Haddah moullah, 110–112
Hafiz, 273
Haj, pilgrimages to Mecca, 281
Hamams (Turkish baths) described, 34
Hamilton, Lieutenant, 225
Hazaras, 63
  Coolies, 186
  Mulberry diet, 87
  Servants, 190
Heat during summer months, 320
Hindeki, summer palace at, 52
  Amir Habibullah at, 297
Hindu dealers and curios, 206
  Money-lenders in Kabul, 251
Hindustani servants and swindling, 187 *seq.*
Holidays, how spent, 69
Horse raising, 240
Houses of Kabul described, 50

Index

I

Ignorance of numbers and telling the time, 92
Imports, 244
Insurrection expected on death of Abdur Rahman, 128, 131, 135, 295
Interpreters, 211
Irrigation, 13, 42, 241

J

Jagdalak, 311
Jelalabad, 311—
  Described, 315, 317
  District, tropical fruits in, 239
  Governor of, 112
  To Khyber, country between, 320
  To Peshawar, five days' journey, 316
Jidrani knife-dancers, 72
Jihad (religious war), 112, 203, 226, 267, 269, 299
"Jubah," account of, 73 *seq.*
Jumrood fort, 316

K

Kabob, 88, 103
Kabul—
  Bazar shops, 49
  British agent in, 301
  Climate, 53 *seq.*
    Adapted for fruit-growing, 239
  Description of city and country round, 42 *seq.*
  Houses described, 50
  Kotwali and soldier guards, 145
  Kotwali office, 143
  Mihman Khana, or guest-house, 33
  Palaces, 51
  People met in streets, 36
Kabul—*continued*—
  Prisons in, 146 *seq.*
  Robberies in, 47, 144
  Russian influence in, 297
  To Peshawar, eight days' journey, 309
  "Wardi" sounded, 49
  Workshops, 234
Kabul river, 42
  At Jelalabad, 316, 319
Kabul valley, crater of ancient volcano, 254
  Once a lake, 258
Kabulis, characteristics, 61, 62, 66, 78
Kabulis, consume large quantities of tea, 89
Kafris, 63
  Boys punished for deserting, 167
Kandahar—
  Described, 13, 14
  District tropical fruits in, 239
  Nasrullah Khan's stay at, 12 *seq.*
Kandaharis, characteristics, 63
Khilat, 22, 29
"Khilat," robes of honour, 134
Khuskh, Russian railway to, 114
Khyber Pass closed, 196
Khyber Pass, opened twice a week for travellers, 314
Kila Durani, 29
Kila Hasham Khan, summer palace of Queen Sultana at, 52
  Abdur Rahman's tomb prepared at, 129
Kila Kazee, 30
Knife-dancers, 72
Kohistan, earthquakes in, 257
Koochee people, 88
  As carriers, 242
  Women, 243
Koran, account of, 268
Kotwal (magistrate), 138, 142 *seq.*
  At Chaman terminus, story of, 6
  Duties of, 47

Index

Kotwali sepoys (policemen), 48, 143 *seq.*
Thieving propensities, 178–180.
Kotwali stations, 145
" Kro," the unit of distance, 10, 245
Kuzilbash people, 266

L

Ladysmith, defence of, 119
Languages of Afghanistan, 63–64
Latabund Pass, 310, 314
Letter-writers in bazars, 50
Letters, 209
How carried, 210
Postage, 211
Loneliness of life in Kabul, 173
Lunatics, 271
Lundi Kotal, British frontier post, 316, 322

M

Mahomed Ali, Sirdar, 120
Mahomed Omar, Sirdar, 30, 110, 120, 126, 133, 294
Acknowledges Habibullah as Amir, 127
Mahomedzai family, allowance from Government, 122
Mahommedan belief on true religions, 202
Marches, length of, 10, 25
Marriage customs, 94–95
Maulavi Najmudeen Aghondzada, Haddah moullah, 110–112
Melons, 317
Mills for grinding corn, 241
Mines, not worked, 261, 305
Mines, out-cropping, 260
Mirzas (clerks), 245 *seq.*
Moullahs—
Influence and practices, 135, 267, 274
Moullahs—*continued*—
Preaching a new religion, 202
Story of Amir and, 15
Mukur, 22, 23
Mulberry diet, 87
Munzil Bagh, 19
Musak, for carrying water and crossing rivers described, 318
Musical instruments, 70
At Kandahar, 22
Musjids, 277
Mussulman year, how reckoned, 279

N

Nasrullah Khan, Shahzada, 40, 120
Builds house like Dorchester House, 121
Conduct on Abdur Rahman's death, 126, 128, 133
Entry into Kabul, 31
Favourite wife dies of cholera, 201
Head of offices and mirzas, 121
Inspecting troops, 136
Journey from Chaman to Kabul, 2 *seq.*
Knowledge of his religion, 203
Mission to England, its object, 110
Routes from and to Kabul, 12
Stay in Kandahar, 12, 21
Visit to England, 1895...1
Welcomed at villages and cities, 5, 11, 24

O

Officers, titles, and promotion, 223
Officials, 99, 101, 103, 109
Power over Abdur Rahman, 125
Princes and, 121
Salaries, 122
Titles, 123

Index

Officials—*continued*—
Treatment of English residents, 123
Workmen and, 236
Old uniforms, 60
'Oud Khels, thief tribe, 221–223
Oxus river, gold in, 260

P

Pack animals, 4, 242, 320
Paghman, summer palace at, 52
Abdur Rahman at, 162
Palaces in Kabul, 51
Parliament, 124
Persian, the Court language, 64
Petitions to Amir, 138
Pilau, 88, 103
Plots to get Abdur Rahman's body, 129
Political situation, 289 *seq.*
Postage on letters and magazines, 211
Powder-making, accidents in, 237
Prayers, 276
Princes, Royal, their position and treatment, 120–122
Prisons, 302
In Kabul, 146 *seq.*
Well in Bala Hisar, 149
Prisoners : food and treatment, 148–150
Prisoners, revolt of, 147
Provisions from India, 194
Pul-i-Bagrami, Amir's shooting-box at, 139
Punishments, 149 *seq.*, 157 *seq.*
Pushtoo, 63

Q

Quail-shooting, 174, 176
Queen Sultana, 30
Influence, 126
Lived at Gulistan serai, 294

R

Racing, 75
Rafts for crossing river, 317
Railways, why not wanted, 305
Railways would be easy to make in Afganistan, 29
Ramazan fast, 277
Regimental bands, 223, 224
Regiments, how named, 220
Religion, 266 *seq.*
Crimes and offences, 274
Revenue of country, 296
Road from Chaman to Kandahar, 29
Robberies—
And murders on roads, 27
By collectors of revenue, 123
In Kabul, 47, 144
Roberts, Lord, march to Kandahar, 113, 114
Roberts, Lord, rased Bala Hisar, 303
Roofs of houses used for exercise and sleeping, 205
Route to Kabul through Khilat, Mukur, and Ghazni, 22
Routes from India to Afghanistan, 12
Rupees, 252
Russian encroachments on frontier, 297
Russian influence in Kabul, 297
Russian railway to Khushk, 114

S

"Sandelee," for warming rooms, described, 90
Sayids, 272
Schools, 64
Seaboard desired, 306
Serais, 312
Servants in Kabul, 186
Shahrara palace, 52

Index

Shaitons (demons), stories of, 81 *seq.*
Sheep raising, 194
Shere Ali, Amir, story of chief of 'Oud Khels and, 221
Shiah sect, 266
Shinwari tribe, 112
Shooting near Kabul, 174
Silk, where produced, 240
Singing, 70
Sirdar, title conferred only on Amir's sons, 30
Smoking, 89
Snipe-shooting, 175
Snuff-taking, 90
Soldiers—
  And arms, 213 *seq.*
  Dress, 59, 213
  Field-cooking utensils, 219
  Guards, 3, 145
  Length of service, 219
  Medals, 218
  Mode of life, 220
  Pay, 218, increased, 136
  Qualities, 225
  Ready to revolt on Abdur Rahman's death, 131, 135–137, 295
  Uniforms, 216
Spies, favourite accusation of, 152
Spies in foreign countries, 303, 306
Sponges, legend about, 84
Spy system, 99, 151
  Abolished, 134
Stealing, punishment for, 166
Story-tellers, 75
Sundials, 91
Suni sect, 266
Superstition, stories of, 78 *seq.*
Swordstick combats, 73

T

Tea imported, 244
Timber, 240, 317
Time, how kept, 91–92
Tirah campaign, 300
  Its effect on traffic, 196
Tobacco, 89
Tortures, 153 *seq.*, 302
Trade and commerce, 229 *seq.*
Treasury, public and private, 101
Turkestanis, 63

U

Usbeg game of "Buz-bazee," 315
Usbeg Lancers, 3
Usbegs, 63

W

Warming rooms, method of, 90
Weddings of different classes, 94–95
Weights and measures, 245
White, General, defence of Ladysmith, 119
Wives, plurality of, 287
Working hours, 205
Workmen, foreman and, 236
  Pay of, 238
Workshops, 229 *seq.*, 234
Women, laws of "purdah" suspended in time of war, 227
Women, not valued in Kabul, 198
Wrestling matches, 74

Y

Yakoob Khan, 112, 293

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